



Website optimisation & controlling through benchmarking

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Agenda

- I** Introduction to Website Benchmarking
- II** Overview of Tools
- III** Onsite Benchmarking
- IV** Measurement Issues

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Introduction to Website Benchmarking

For many companies, the internet is an important sales and communication channel to (prospective) customers. A website communicates the **image** and values of a company, whilst also serving as a major source of **information**. Additionally, sites offer online **transactions** and **added value**:

- **Automobile industry:** car configuration, financing options, accessory shops.
- **Insurance companies:** analyzing risk coverage, calculate premiums, manage insurance policies
- **Telecommunication providers:** compare tariffs or mobile phones, manage phone bills & contract issues

Introduction to Website Benchmarking

Therefore, specific internet goals and strategies may be pursued:

- **Increase customer satisfaction and loyalty** (by offering a new service and sales channel which serves customers' needs).
- **Reduce costs** (by migrating labour intensive processes to the internet: Online purchasing / e-procurement, customer care / help desk etc.).
- **Increase sales** by
 - offering an additional channel
 - covering more target groups
 - covering each relevant stage - pre-sales, sales, after-sales.

Introduction to Website Benchmarking

The efficiency of these services has to be controlled, in order to be able to offer the **correct services** (value of usage) and also ensure that these services are offered **correctly** (usability) from the customers' point of view. Therefore an absolute assessment as well as a relative one is important:

- How does the own website perform **relative** to the industry average? Where are strengths and weaknesses?
- How is the own site **positioned** in comparison to the competition (peer group)?
- Which aspects have room for **improvement**?
- What examples for **do's and don'ts** can be taken from the competition?
- What **market developments** need to be considered?
- Which **needs** are not yet fulfilled in the market?

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Tools

Essentially, all or some of these questions can be addressed using the following tools:

- **Expert report:**
The main competitors' websites in a particular sector/defined market are examined using predetermined criteria with exogenous weighting (by experts).
- **Usability benchmarking:**
Several websites will be tested and compared according to their usability experience. Interviews are typically done in the form of individual explorative interviews, imposing surf tasks on interviewees.
- **Onsite survey:**
Visitors to the websites of companies within a certain field are questioned about the respective sites.

Tools

Characteristics **Expert report**

- A cost effectiveness analysis.
- Extensive set of criteria.
- The criteria are evaluated by experts (not by target group).
- The criteria are aggregated using a utility function (importance weight).
- In most cases, the importance weights are arbitrarily defined.

Tools

Characteristics Usability Benchmarking

- **Several websites (relevant competitors in a specific market) are assessed in one usability session (alternatively: side by side).**
- **Core tasks / transactions are compared (e.g. ordering a book, transferring cash to another account).**
- **Best case: participants are from target group.**
- **Worst case: participants are students.**
- **Sometimes done on a quantitative level.**
- **Qualitative results: relative strengths and weaknesses.**

Tools

Case study Usability Benchmarking

- Website of competitors with relevant content and/or functions are selected, e.g.



- Each participant assesses 3 websites (rotated).
- Internet-users with online shopping experience; sample spread over age, gender, education.
- Core aspects / tasks / transactions are compared:
 - Layout of homepage
 - Searching for and ordering products.
 - Searching for (after sales) service information.
- Qualitative results: best practices for layout / design, navigation, display of products, product comparisons etc.

Tools

Characteristics **Onsite Benchmarking**

- **Onsite survey, direct contact on the participating websites.**
 - Actual users of the websites are surveyed who have the necessary interest, reason for visiting and involvement (specific reason for visiting and not an artificial test situation, adequacy of the results).
 - In addition to satisfaction with the site, results on user structure and behaviour/interests can be derived.
- **Set out as a multi-client study**
 - **Compare** competitors sites / learn form the competition
 - Participation of major competitors in a specific market.
 - Exchange of experience between participating sites.
- **Named Benchmarking: comparison not only to an anonymous average, but also to individual and named competitors.**
- **Monitoring of own performance over the course of time.**

Tools

Onsite Benchmarking: Applications

- **Assessment of quantitative acceptance measurements**
Is an acceptance quota of 70% good or bad? This can only be answered if compared to the competition.
- **Discovery of own deficiencies and check of other sites for sensible solutions**
If own deficiencies are known, solutions from “best in class” sites can be used.
- **Prioritisation of improvement measures**
What is important, what less important? In times of tight budgets, it is necessary to prioritise those aspects, which are most important for the user or those which are most accepted.
- **Observation of developments:**
 - Effects of improvements
 - Identifying needs
 - Identifying erosion effects
 - Assessment of changes on competitors' sites: Do these need to be considered?
What are best practices?

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Onsite Benchmarking

Need for **industry-specific comparison**, because standards for a “good” website differ due to:

- **Involvement in products and brands**
Automobile vs. Insurance sites (former has a higher potential for enthusiastic visitors).
- **Economic relevance (and consequent budgets)**
Customer login-areas: Mobile telecommunication vs. Insurance (in the first case, the bill will be viewed monthly, in the second case, once a year at most).
- **User Requirements / Expectations**
Sectors related to the internet have a higher level of requirements (e.g. online shopping).
- **Available online features:**
Sectors with fewer features have a lower assessment level (fewer requirements, but also people develop less enthusiasm for them).
- **Complexity of the sites**
Trade-off between content/interactivity and usability/technical implementation. The tendency is that the more in-depth the content and the greater the number or sophistication of tools, the more difficult it is to obtain good marks for usability and technical implementation.

Onsite Benchmarking

Industry	Overall satisfaction
Automobile	6
Insurance	-9
Mobile telecommunications	1

(Scaled) Level of satisfaction

(Top-2-Boxes on a scale of 1-5, centred on an overall action standard; Values from 2003)

Industry	Content	Usability	Technical implementation	Company information	Website loyalty
Insurance	-3	3	5	0	-5
Mobile telecommunications	0	0	2	-	2
Top 10%	4	9	7	2	9

Factor indices (original values: range 0-100, centered on a n overall action standard; values from 2003)

Industry average is spread considerably, however there are specific strengths and weaknesses.

Onsite Benchmarking

Limited comparability due to differences in user structure:

- **First-time vs. frequent visitor**

Since frequent visitors represent a positively pre-selected sample (visiting the site again due to suspected benefit of the site), they should assess the site more highly than first time visitors.

- **Age groups**

Young visitors often rate aspects better than older visitors. This can be due to a) a greater affinity to the internet or b) the fact that older visitors have different / more critical requirements.

- **Customers vs. Non-customers**

Due to a higher brand affinity, customers are more likely to give a higher assessment or are more familiar with the company and what it offers.

- **Psychographical segments**

Visitors can be arranged in individual segments, according to their differing attitudes, which vary on account of their behaviour on the internet.

→ **2 alternatives:**

- **Treat website and visitors as a unity and compare totals.**
- **Compare same type of visitors (e.g. customers) across sites.**

Onsite Benchmarking

Limits of Benchmarking

- **Be aware of brands' background.**
- **Be aware of differing target groups.**
- **Each brand must find its own USP.**
- **Goal is to find unique solutions, not just copying existing solutions.**
- **In some cases, comparisons need to focus on peer group(s).**

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Measurement Issues

Accuracy of measurement

- **Objectivity**
 - Degree to which the result is independent from the observer.
- **Reliability**
 - Test-Retest-Reliability.
- **Validity**
 - Measuring the intended effect.
- **Representativeness**
 - Sample represents all relevant characteristics of the total population.

Measurement Issues

Author	ADAC	Autoscout2 4.de	Incovis AG (eCar- Report)	Psyma Online
Method				
Applied method	Expert report	OUL	Expert report	Onsite Benchmarking
Comprehensiveness of result	Relative Assessment	Only a qualitative assessment, but also usability optimisation	Relative Assessment	Additional information about differences in user structure / behaviour / needs
Exogenous weighting factors	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
(Empirical) Objectivity	No	Partially	No	Yes

Measurement Issues

	ADAC (January 2003)	Autoscout.de (Sept. 2003)	Incovis AG (eCar-Report 2002)
1	MB.de	Porsche.com	Audi.de
2	Renault.de	Ford.de	Opel.de
3	Toyota.de	Smart.com	MB.de
4	BMW.de	MB.de	BMW.de
5	Ford.de	Lancia.de	Ford.de

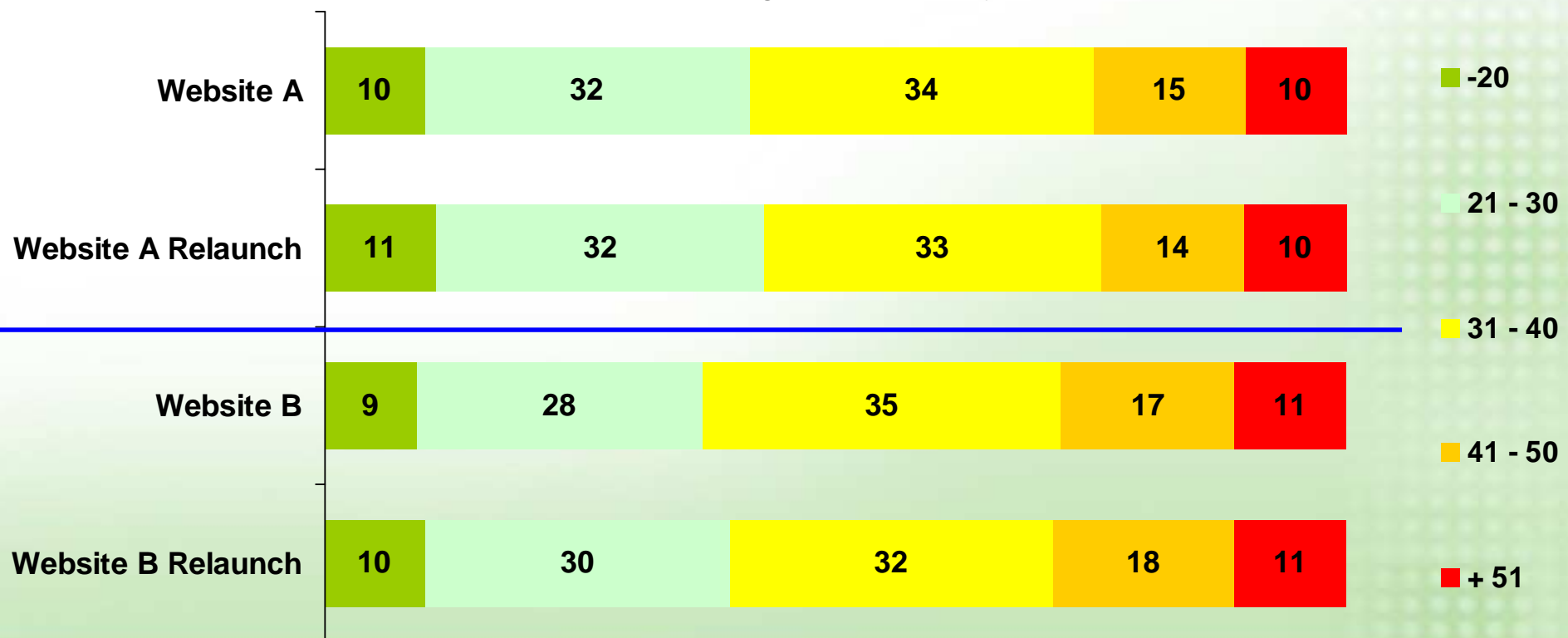
Naturally, different studies deliver different results

Measurement Issues

Reliability: *The measurements took place over a period of ca. one month*

Age

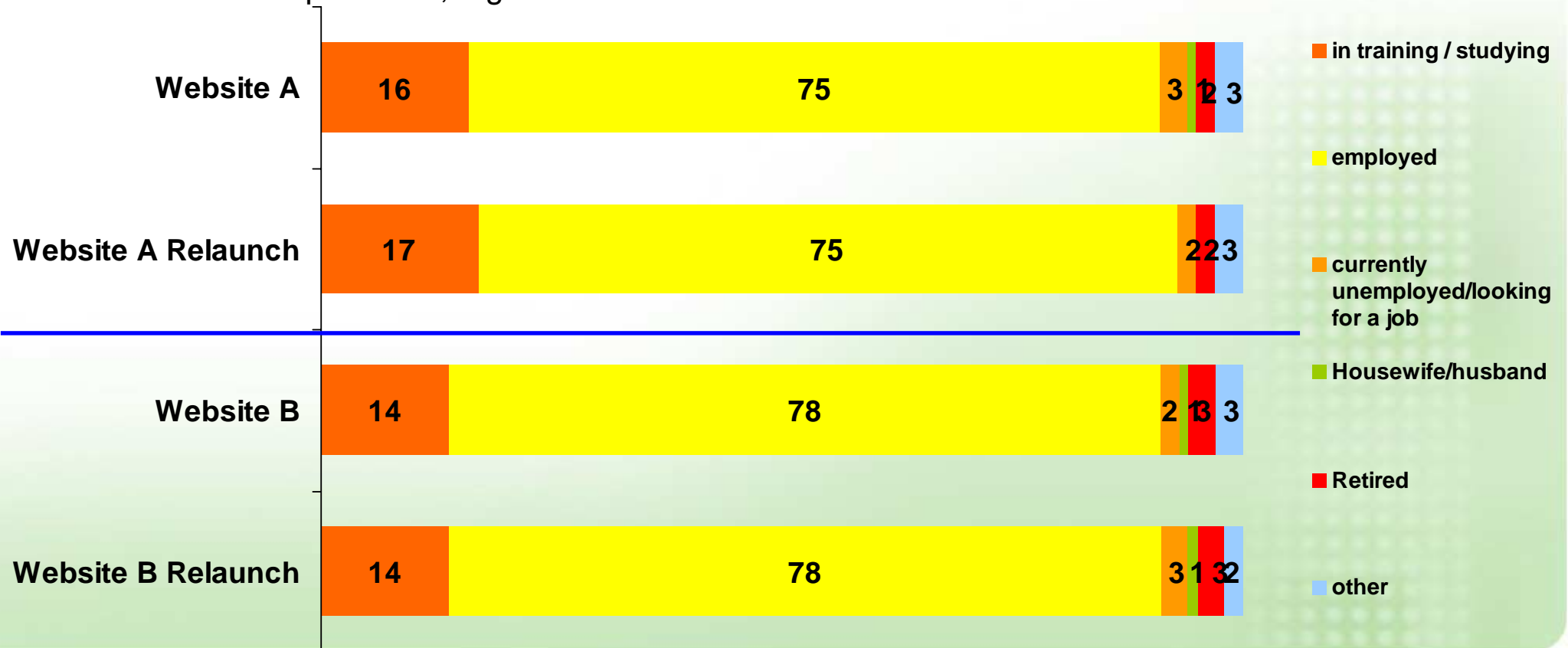
Base: all respondents (each n=1000); Figures in %, in years



Measurement Issues

Reliability: Occupation

Base: all respondents; Figures in %

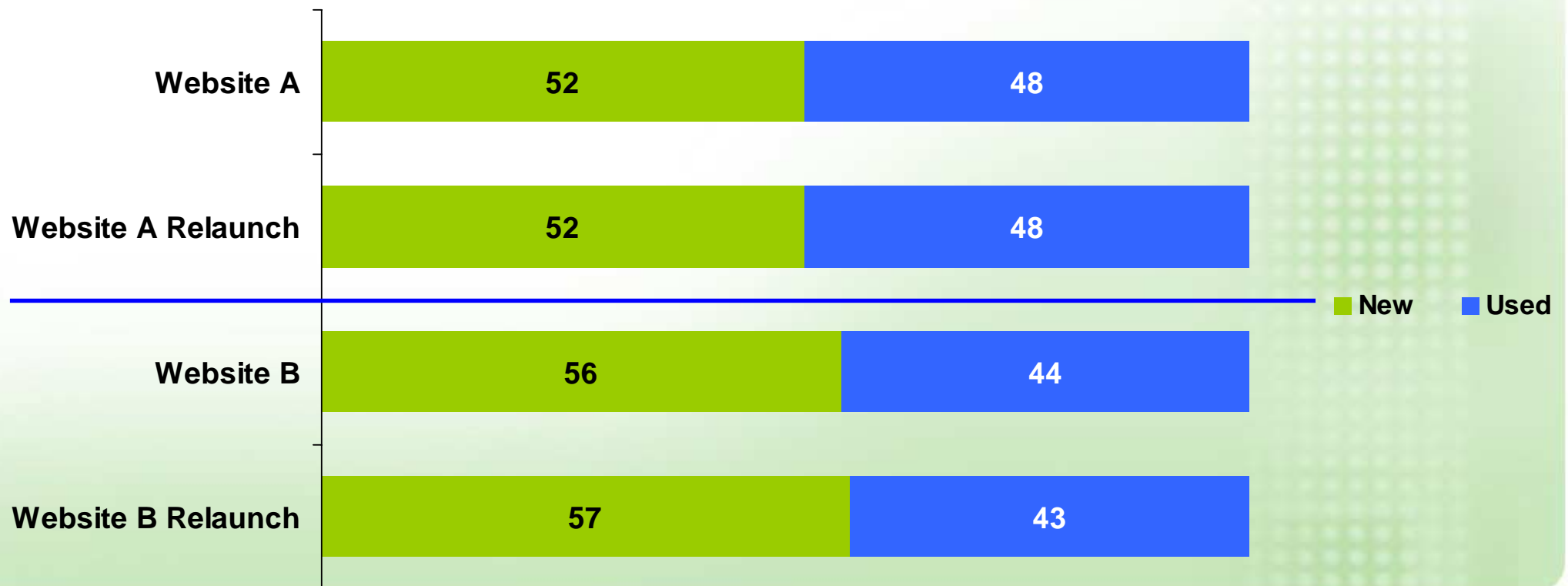


Measurement Issues

Reliability:

Did you buy your current (main) car as new or used?

Base: all car drivers; Figures in %

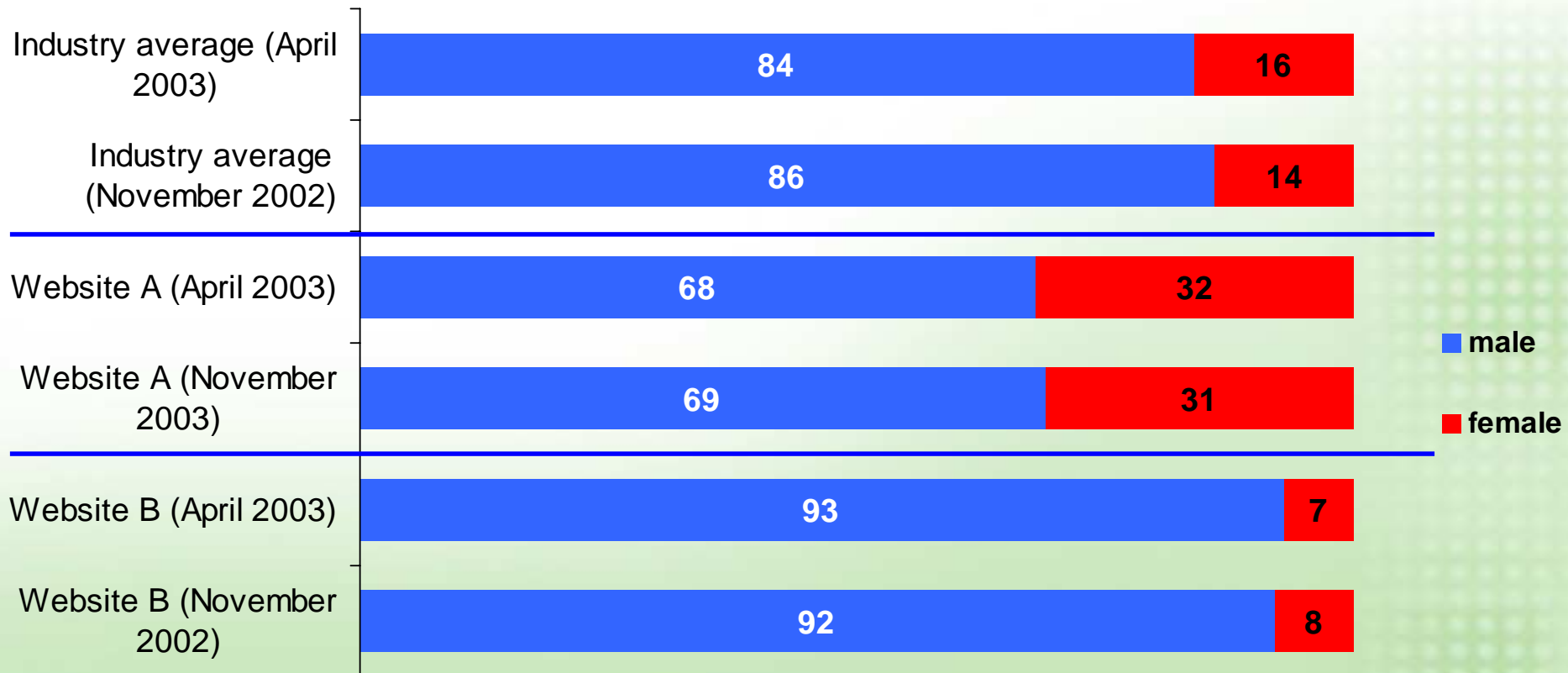


Measurement Issues

Reliability: *Measurements on a half yearly basis also produce reliable results*

Gender

Base: all respondents; Figures in %



Measurement Issues

Validity:

2002

Before the re-launch

	Up-to-date content, interactivity and information	Visual impact and clarity	Information about buying new cars	Technical realisation	Information about buying used cars	Company information	Customer loyalty
Brand A	-1	8	2	0	-14	-4	2
Brand B	1	7	7	-1	5	0	8
Brand C	4	5	7	0	1	0	8
Brand D	-6	1	-4	0	-10	-9	-6
Brand F	-12	-8	-6	-19	-12	-12	-12
Brand G	-4	4	-3	-1	-22	-11	-4

2003

After the re-launch

Brand A	-1	5	3	-1	-9	-5	4
Brand B	5	7	10	-2	2	2	8
Brand C	4	6	10	-1	2	1	7
Brand D	-1	5	4	6	-3	-3	2
Brand F	0	6	6	2	-2	0	2
Brand G	-3	6	1	2	-14	-7	0

Measurement Issues

