Using Calls To Action As An Inbound Marketing Conversion Practice

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Abstract:

The development of the new inbound marketing approach focusing on the user led to the emergence of several practices aiming at converting visitors into leads. The objective of our study is to examine the role of calls to action in guiding conversion intent among Algerian Internet users.

Our sample consists of 216 respondents generated through a quantitative survey via an online questionnaire.

The findings of this research show that overall, calls to action constitute a significant conversion opportunity as long as the content and the counterparty have been clearly identified and assigned an importance by the users. However, conversion may go beyond the traditionally known design criteria, additional factors may take place and drive the conversion action.

Keywords: Inbound marketing; call to action; conversion.

JEL Classification: M31.

Introduction

The emergence of modern technologies over the last few years has given rise to several marketing concepts, including inbound marketing. The evolution related to the development of digital and new consumption models has given birth to a new inbound approach that complements the traditional marketing approach.

Inbound marketing is user-centered and aims to bring the consumer to the company without having to go looking for them. The idea behind is to establish a process that can be described as inclusive (Marrone & Gallic, 2018). Inbound requires very precise targeting of the audience and quality communication to get in touch with potential customers through materials and experiences deemed useful to entertain and inform the audience with content they are looking for themselves (Patrutiu-Baltes, 2016).

The advent of digital technologies over the past few decades has driven a certain willingness on the part of vendors to capture consumers on the web. Increasingly, online shopping is turning into a frequent behavior, the Internet has made a large amount of data accessible to consumers at any time (Horváth et al., 2022). The combination of mobile commerce and social commerce provides a potentially effective e-commerce platform. Further, global internet penetration reached 50% of the total population in January 2017. Most users reached the internet using mobile terminals.(Handayani et al., 2018).

Recent statistics published by "Digital report: we are social" state that there were 32.09 million Internet users in Algeria at the beginning of 2023, with an Internet penetration rate of 70.9%. Algeria had 23.95 million social media users in January 2023, or 52.9% of the population. 48.53 million mobile cellular connections were active in Algeria at the beginning of 2023, equivalent to 107.2 percent of the total population.

As the level of attraction towards a product or service intensifies, offer representation becomes more challenging (Zhou et al., 2019), chiefly because the ultimate goal of sellers is to maximize the number of conversions, not the number of clicks (Shan et al., 2018). Inbound marketing aims to draw in prospects and nurture them until they become loyal customers. To establish a lasting relationship with consumers, brands must guide them through several stages, starting from being a stranger to

becoming a visitor, and eventually, a prospect, customer, and possibly even an ambassador. (Stéphane TRUPHÈME, 2016).

After achieving the desired level of traffic, it is essential to prompt visitors to share their contact information. Premium content that requires filling out a form to access can serve this purpose. This is where calls-to-action and landing pages become crucial.(Truphème & Gastaud, 2017).

Calls-to-action are buttons or links on a company's website designed for lead generation. They prompt visitors to take action such as downloading an eBook, attending a webinar and purchasing a product or service (Halligan & Shah, 2014).

Call-to-action buttons are an essential practice for converting visitors into leads or customers. Depending on the marketing objectives, they play a key role in the transition from a simple visit to a potential lead or even an actual customer. Therefore, it is important to design these buttons carefully to ensure successful conversion, which is the ultimate goal of the inbound marketing strategy. Without this conversion, the efforts made upstream to attract visitors to the website would have no concrete end.

This work intends to study a sample of Internet users likely to be exposed to calls-to-action while browsing the Internet in order to determine the conversion criteria and to measure the weight of its content with respect to the conversion action. Our research aims to answer the following question: *"Do calls-to-action influence the inbound marketing conversion process?"*.

1- Literature review

To illustrate the conversion stage in inbound marketing using calls to action, it is important to conduct a brief literature review on the key concepts discussed in this work. The subsequent section will elaborate on the various stages of inbound marketing, with an emphasis on the conversion stage. Additionally, an overview of different types of calls-to-action will be presented, along with the effectiveness criteria that are vital for achieving successful conversions.

1-1- Inbound marketing approach

Inbound marketing is a content-based marketing method that aims to attract and retain customers by offering them useful and relevant content

rather than interrupting them with traditional advertising. (Trupheme, 2021) explains that there are four key steps in this process:

- Attraction: the objective of this step is to attract visitors to your website by offering them relevant and quality content. This can be done through a variety of channels, such as search engines, social networks and blogs
- Conversion: once visitors are attracted, the goal is to convert them into leads through forms, call to actions and landing pages. To accomplish this, you can offer exclusive content or special offers that encourage visitors to leave their contact information.
- Maturation: once you have converted visitors into leads, the goal is to "nurture" them with relevant and useful content that will help to better understand their problem or need and educate their buying decision. This can be done through emails, webinars, e-books, case studies, etc.
- Sales: Finally, when the prospect is ready to buy, the goal is to convert them into a customer. This can be done by offering a product demonstration, a free trial, a personalized consultation or a special offer. The ultimate goal is to satisfy the customer's needs and encourage them to become a promoter of your brand.

1-2- Call to action

CTAs have the shape of an encircled icon and are positioned principally at the bottom right of the screen, floating above the user interface. From a functional point of view, floating action buttons provide quick access to important or common actions within an application. Typically, this involves positive interaction, such as creating, sharing, exploring, etc. Since its launch in 2014, Google has incorporated the floating UI call button element across a wide range of its web and mobile apps in an attempt to create a visual language that incorporates the standards of good design and advances in engineering (Pibernik et al., 2019).

A call-to-action is a button or image that aims to turn visitors into leads. Strategically placed on the pages of a website or blog, it directs traffic to a target page with a specific objective, called landing page. The landing page will aim to collect information about qualified prospects, the call button can then offer a free white paper in exchange for a registration (Cames, 2023).

The visual conception of a call to action button remains very difficult; it is the interface that can arouse emotions to serve as a hook for

the visitor as well as for the information content that can be designed in many visual forms (Silvennoinen & Jokinen, 2016). Calls to action allow visitors to choose the most appropriate navigation path based on clickable choices. The visitor's attitude towards the ad is an important determinant of conversion (Erdem et al., 2017).

Clicking on a CTA leads to a landing page that is entirely dedicated to the offer in question (white paper, webinar...). To best guide the user in his journey, it is necessary that the title on the call-to-action explicitly describes what the click will lead to. There must be a coherent link between these two elements, both visually and editorially (Yung, 2021).

As online users become more cautious about sharing their personal information, it is crucial to effectively communicate the benefits of an offer to motivate them to click on a CTA button. The CTA should be relevant to the context of the page and emphasize the value of premium content. A generic "contact us" CTA may not suffice, as it may not provide enough value to visitors, especially those who are in the early stages of their buying journey. Majority of visitors require CTAs that are tailored to their level of readiness or maturity in the decision-making process (Truphème, 2016).

1-3- CTAs types

Marketing campaigns require different types of CTAs, as there are various tactics available to steer your audience on their journey. For example, a campaign aimed at gaining newsletter subscribers may utilize a form submission, while a campaign prompting users to "learn more" may feature a button. Hubspot academy has listed the different types of call to actions (Leaning, 2022)**:**

- Buttons: are the most commonly used type of CTA, featuring an icon accompanied by a phrase that urges users to take action. The design of buttons can vary depending on the brand and campaign goal, but they typically feature high-contrast colors to make them stand out on the page.
- Forms: Form submission CTAs aim to convert website visitors into leads by providing them with valuable offers in exchange for their contact information. These offers may include downloadable content, product quotes, service sign-ups, subscriptions, and more.

- Banners: a CTA banner is a type of CTA that can be placed at the top, bottom, or side of a webpage, containing engaging text and design that encourages visitors to take action.
- Contextual links are clickable text located within the body copy of a blog post that lead users to a related landing page.
- Pop-ups are a type of CTA that appear suddenly in a small window on the page. They can be an effective way to communicate an offer or encourage users to sign up for a service since users tend to ignore static CTA buttons and forms.
- Slide-in CTAs are similar to pop-ups and designed to capture the user's attention by sliding in from the bottom or the sidebar of the page. They are a less disruptive alternative to pop-ups and offer a good option for incorporating CTAs without interrupting the user experience.

1-4- Call to action optimization

To generate the best conversion rates, (Halligan & Shah, 2014) suggest the following rules when creating a call to action:

- Usability: the main concept is to ensure that visitors do not have to think about what to do next. Buttons should be straightforward and concise, clearly indicating the action and outcome to be expected.
- Prominence: to boost conversion rates, the call-to-action should be prominent, easily noticeable, and highlighted. It should be positioned near the top of the page as a clickable image with a font size that is large enough to be easily read.
- Action-oriented: the call to action must start with a verb and tell the visitor what action to take.

Call-to-actions play a pivotal role in an inbound marketing strategy, as they have a significant impact on converting visitors into leads. Even a small increase of just 1% in the conversion rate can result in a substantial boost of several thousand more leads. According to (Trupheme, 2021), an optimized call-to-action meets the following criteria:

- A clearly articulated value proposition: users are increasingly wary of disclosing their data, so it's important to give them a compelling reason to do so. The call-to-action should be clearly contextualized to the content being offered. If a page is about a particular topic, the CTA should be related to that topic to maximize the conversion rate.

- Easy to use and action-oriented: to be effective, CTAs should be clear and easy to understand, providing users with a precise understanding of what they can gain and the action they need to take to avail of the offer, such as registering or downloading a document. Using action verbs and straightforward language in your CTAs is recommended, while avoiding complex or ambiguous phrasing that may confuse visitors and require additional effort to comprehend.
- Visible: website visitors can access desired content without going to the home page, thanks to good SEO that positions multiple pages of the site on search engines, including blog pages. This creates multiple entry points for visitors, each of which can display a call to action. It is important to consider the design, color and shape of these pages, trying several versions to optimize their effectiveness.

2-Methodology

After an extensive review of relevant literature, our study aimed to address the aforementioned research points through a quantitative approach using an empirical-deductive methodology. The quantitative approach seemed appropriate because it permitted to collect measurable data on how Algerian Internet users respond to calls to action. Thus, we could identify the main determinants of the potential impact of CTAs in generating high conversion rates. We attempt through this work to test the present general problematic hypothesis: "*Calls to action positively influence the conversion process*".

Based on the above literature review, this article presents the following research hypotheses:

H1/ There is a strong relationship between the offered counterparty and the conversion intention.

H2/ The criteria that determine the design of a clickable call to action are visibility, ease of use and proposed value.

H3/ Call to action content drives conversion intent.

Figure number (01): Conceptual model
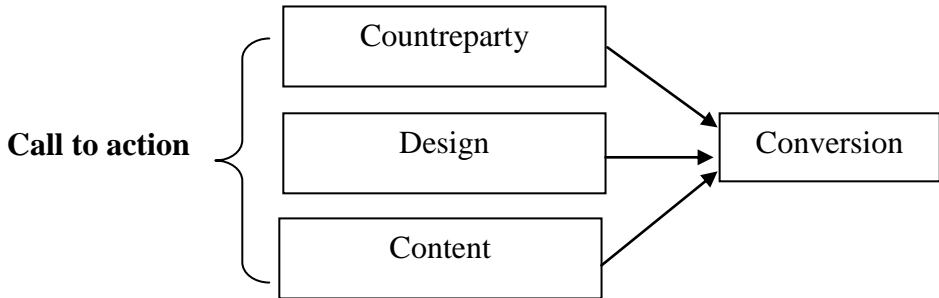
Source: Developed by the authors

To achieve our research objectives and validate our hypotheses, we conducted a survey consisting of 13 questions among Internet users in Algeria. We used a non-probability snowball sampling method to select participants that already encounter calls to action while surfing the net.

To ensure the accuracy and validity of our survey, we first sought feedback from a small group of internet users, including family members and colleagues, who reviewed the questionnaire for any issues. After receiving no reported issues, we distributed the questionnaire to a wider population.

The collected data were analyzed using SPSS version 21. We conducted a Chi-square test, a regression analysis, and a one-way ANOVA test to further analyze the data, ensuring robustness and rigor in our findings.

3-Results

3-1- Sample profile

Table number (01): Respondents' profile

	Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	52	24.1%
	Female	164	75.9%
Age	Less than 20 years	37	17.1%
	Between 21 and 30 years	153	70.8%
	Between 31 and 40 years	24	11.1%
	Between 41 and	1	0.5%

	50 years		
	More than 50 years	1	0.5%
Professional statut	Student	121	56%
	Employee	74	34.2%
	Retired	1	0.5%
	Unemployed	20	9.3%

Source: Survey outputs

Gender distribution of the respondents indicates that most are female (75.9%) and (24.1%) are male. We count among them (56%) students and only (0.5%) retired. The repartition of the respondents by age category shows that more than 50% of the sample belongs to the age category between 21 and 30 years old, followed by the respondents whose age is less than 20 years old with a rate of 17.1%.

3-2- Hypothesis testing

H1/ There is a strong relationship between the offered counterparty and the conversion intention.

To test for the existence of a relationship between the proposed consideration and conversion intention, we conducted a Chi-square test of independence.

Table number (02): Chi-square test

	Value	df	Asymptotic significance (bilateral)
Pearson's Chi-square	223,795	4	,000
Likelihood ratio	50,643	4	,000
Linear-by-linear association	,832	1	,362
Number of valid observations	216		

Source: SPSS outputs

Table number (03): Symmetric measurements

		Value	Approximate significance
	Phi	1,006	,000
Nominal by Nominal	V de Cramer	,712	,000
	Contingency coefficient	,709	,000
Number of valid observations		216	

Source: SPSS outputs

The significance of the chi-square test is equal to (0,00); it's lower then (0,05). It refers to an association between the "counterparty" and the "conversion intention".

Furthermore, the result of Cramer's V is (0.721), which indicates a strong association between the two tested variables.

Therefore, the first hypothesis that states that there is a strong relationship between the proposed counterparty and the conversion intention is accepted.

H2/ The criteria that determine the design of a clickable call to action are visibility, ease of use and proposed value.

To test the second hypothesis we opted for a linear regression. Before starting the linear regression, we will check that the data collected is suitable for the regression analysis.

In social sciences, a reliable regression equation can be obtained from a sample of 15 respondents by one explanatory variable, i.e. if we have five explanatory variables the sample size will be 15 times five. Since we have three explanatory variables, the sample size will be 3 times 15. The minimum sample size will then be 45 individuals. During the data collection, we were able to collect 216 responses. Therefore, the sample size is sufficient for the application of the linear regression.

✓ **Multi-colinearity:** Multi-colinearity is a statistical phenomenon that occurs when an explanatory variable in the model has a linear combination with one or more explanatory variables. Multi-colinearity

can increase the variance of the regression coefficients, which makes their stability and interpretation too difficult.

Table number (04): Correlation matrix

Model		Value	Usability	visibility
	Value	1,000	,102	-,315
Correlation	Usability	,102	1,000	,022
	Visibility	-,315	,022	1,000
	Value	,008	,001	-,002
Covariance	Usability	,001	,003	,000
	Visibility	-,002	,000	,007

Source: SPSS outputs

According to the correlation coefficients between the independent variables all correlations are less than 90%. We can conclude that the multi-colinearity has not been raped.

✓ **Residual normality:** We can test the normality of the residuals by means of the Gaussian P-P diagram of standardized residuals;

Figure number (02): The Gaussian P-P plot of standardized residual
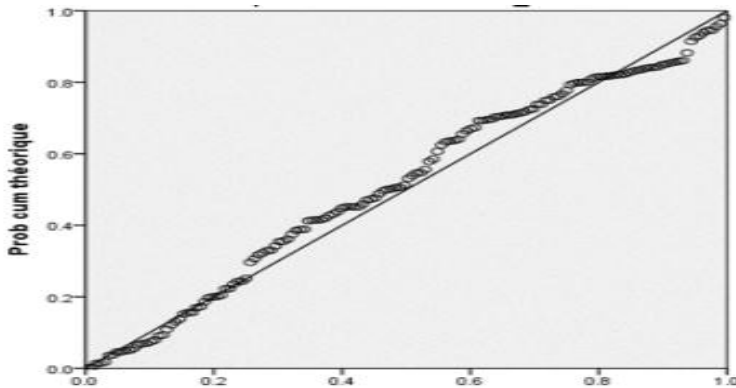
Source: SPSS outputs

We notice that the residuals are aligned to the diagonal. This means that the normality of the distribution of the residuals is verified.

✓ **Model evaluation:**

Table number (05): Model Summary

Model	R	R-square	R-square adjusted	Standard error of estimation
1	,201	,040	,027	,882

Source: SPSS outputs

From the previous table and based on adjusted R, the model explains 2.7 % of the variation in the dependent variable. Meaning, the determinants of a good call to action explain 2.7 % of the variation in conversion.

✓ **Evaluation of parameters**

Table number (06): Coefficients of model variables and their statistical significance

Model	Non-standardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.
	A	Standard error	Bêta		
(Constant)	4,884	,233		20,941	,000
1 Visibility	-,156	,086	-,129	-1,824	,070
Usability	,012	,059	,014	,206	,837
Value	-,142	,088	-,115	-1,612	,108

Source: SPSS outputs

The model is statistically significant but there are no independent variables that can individually contribute to the variation in the dependent variable. This means that there are other explanatory variables except (visibility, ease, and value) that explain conversion intent through a call to action. We assume that there are situational variables that can explain conversion intent.

After the analysis, this hypothesis is rejected because there are no variables in the model that can significantly explain the variation in conversion through a call to action.

H3/Call to action content drives conversion intent

To test the hypothesis stipulating that conversion intention is determined by the content of the call to action, we conducted a one-way ANOVA test.

Table number (07): ANOVA test

	Sum of squares	**df**	**Square means**	**F**	**Sig.**
Inter-groups	15,174	1	15,174	12,856	,000
Intra-groups	252,585	214	1,180		
Total	267,759	215			

Source: SPSS outputs

The results of the ANOVA test on the table above show that the test is significant, it is less than 0.05 which means that the content of the call to action directs the conversion intention. Consequently, the hypothesis H3 is accepted.

4- Discussion

This work implies that the possibility of conversion via call to action is in order; most of the respondents are ready to exchange their information in order to match the proposed offer to their need. For this, it is important to design call to action in adequacy with the expectations of the target and even to adjust them according to the different segments so that each visitor finds what he is looking for in the ultimate objective of optimizing the conversion.

With regard to the criteria that determine a clickable call to action, including visibility, ease of use and value, the results of this research have shown that this hypothesis is rejected. This may be surprising, as these criteria are often considered important in the design of effective calls to action. However, our results suggest that there may be other factors to consider. It would be interesting to explore this issue further in the future, perhaps by examining specific examples of effective call-to-actions to identify common characteristics.

The existence of a strong relationship between proposed consideration and conversion intent suggests that users are more likely to

click on a call to action if the proposed consideration, such as a special offer or free download, is attractive to them. This can be useful for marketers looking to increase conversion rates on their web pages. It can be a good idea to offer incentives that interest them to click first and convert second.

The findings of this research show that the content of a call to action itself, whether textual or visual, can have an impact on the user's intention to click on the button. It would be interesting to see how different forms of call to action content, such as images or videos, can affect conversion.

Conclusion

This study aimed to explore the use of calls to action as a conversion tool in the context of inbound marketing. The results of the survey with a sample of 216 Internet users confirmed two hypotheses: the first one being that the counterparty proposed in the call to action is a determining factor of the users' conversion intention. Indeed, the results showed that the more attractive the proposed counterparty is, the higher the conversion intention is. The second accepted hypothesis is that the content of the call to action is also a factor influencing the conversion intention. The results showed that users were more likely to click on call-to-action buttons that clearly indicated the benefits of the product or service offered.

Nevertheless, the results also indicated that traditional criteria typically deemed crucial for creating effective calls to action, such as visibility, ease of use, and value proposition, were not found to be decisive factors. Instead, other situational factors may be identified as contributing to the effectiveness of calls to action.

The findings of this study have practical implications for marketers seeking to enhance their online conversion strategy. It emphasizes the need for customized call-to-action designs that align with the unique nature of the business and target audience. However, limitations such as the sample size and reliance on self-reported responses should be considered when interpreting the results. Future research with larger samples and analysis of user behavior could provide valuable insights. Additionally, exploring the generalizability of findings to different types of calls-to-action could further enhance their effectiveness in inbound marketing. Overall, this study contributes to the online marketing literature and underscores the

importance of continued research to improve our understanding of online conversion tools.

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