

MakeMyTrip: 2013 (A): Problem Definition for Redesigning the Home Page

In early 2013, Mr. Deepak Kumar, Chairman and Group CEO of MakeMyTrip¹ (MMT), summoned a meeting to discuss about redesigning the MMT Homepage². It was a three-hour meeting at the Hindustan Conference Room at the company's head office in Gurgaon, India. This meeting was attended by key members of the homepage website redesign team comprising the CBO, Analytics head, User Experience (UX) head, Product head and the Tech head (CTO). As a pre-read for the meeting, Ajay Singh, Product Head, shared his findings³ that could help in defining the issues faced by visitors to the homepage of MMT.

DeepakKumar (Chairman & Group CEO):

"Guys, I suggest we wrap this meeting up now. It's decided that we need a new homepage design and this team is going to head this project with a rough timeline of 15 weeks. Some of you have raised a few important points and concerns and these would need thorough validations before we proceed."

"This is our first major redesign in 5 years! The homepage is the face of our brand and how our customers discover our site and its offerings. As we saw today, 65-70% of our total unique visitors interact with the homepage while booking a flight ticket or a hotel room. And 60% of them [of the total unique visitors], in fact entered our website starting from the homepage."

"Let's meet a week from today to review a detailed work plan from the Product team."

After the meeting, Deepak realized that a project of such nature needed all the teams to work together closely to achieve the common goal and at the same time bring their unique skills forward. Though this would mean conflicting opinions and viewpoints, but finally

¹ See Exhibit 1 for brief history of MakeMyTrip and additional background information and Exhibit 2 for data on Leisure and Unmanaged Business Travel Industry in India

² See Exhibit 3 for the pre-redesign home page of MMT

³ See Exhibit 4 for Details of the findings of the preliminary studies carried out by Product Team

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Teaching material of the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad is prepared as a basis for class discussion. Cases are not designed to present illustrations of either correct or incorrect handling of administrative problems.

Stakeholder names have been altered. Meetings have been tailored to bring out conflicting priorities for better learning.

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team members would understand what their customers wanted. Deepak decided to spend a few minutes in his office recounting the highlights of the meeting. He mentally traced back to the start of the meeting and recollected stakeholders' views on the subject.

Reflections by Deepak on the Meeting for Redesigning the Home Page

Deepak Kumar (Chairman & Group CEO):

"In the past few months, there have been isolated discussions amongst us on the need to redesign our homepage in a significant way. With all the relevant department heads here, I wanted to hear your thoughts on this and decide if we need to take this up as a key project in our upcoming product roadmap."

The CTO, who was head of the tech team, was the first to react. His team's responsibility was to ensure that the MMT website was available to its millions of users, the webpages loaded fast and the security of the entire site was top notch. In a day over 3 million dollars' worth of tickets were booked on MMT website across 20 carriers and 10 K hotels.

Soham Agarwal (CTO):

"I am all for this redesign. Our current homepage code has evolved over a period of 10 years and been written by over 15 engineers. A redesign will give us the opportunity to streamline the code architecture in a big way and I am very confident of making significant gains in page load time."

"We had begun transitioning key parts of our website to this new API based architecture and have seen very encouraging results. My team has not been able to start work on the homepage as they are not clear on the direction. Also, picking up a project like this redesign would require us to redraw our product roadmap. I would expect such an effort to at least push 20% of our work to the next quarter and that is if we are restricting this effort to our desktop platform"

"I am afraid, if we expand the scope of this redesign to our mobile users, the team might need significantly more time. I am not even sure if we have all the requisite technical skills in my team yet for such a major undertaking on our fledgling mobile platform."

Manik Goyal (CBO):

"I think it is very important to carefully narrow the scope of this redesign. The industry as a whole is moving more towards high margin products like international flights, flight+hotel combos, hotels and holidays. The increased ticket sizes of these products also make this shift compelling as it boosts up our top line. We have long known that our biggest strength has been the domestic flights product and our homepage needs to play a significant role in promoting our other products."

"We should capitalize on our high homepage traffic and be aggressive in banners that are specifically cross selling these high value products. I know in the past we have had discussions on how we must go easy on banners as they might clutter up our homepage and might annoy our customers. A lot of this is based on customer feedback sessions that we conduct in our Gurgaon office from time to time. I continue to urge us to take this data with a pound of salt. In spite of our best efforts to ensure

an appropriate demographic mix in our test audience, I would still classify our test audience to have a very large metro bias. ~20% of our traffic is from tier 2 and 3 cities and it is growing at a fast clip. I was just reading a very insightful consumer research study conducted in China², which showed that Chinese customers preferred cluttered websites over sparse/minimalist ones. This is the exact opposite with western audiences who prefer neat and clean websites with minimal overheads. Given our large exposure to western websites and our advanced internet usage habits, we should be very careful to not extend our own biases into this redesign.”

Dilip Arora (UX head):

“I agree that we should keep our biases from entering our decision making process. However, I think our approach in the past with respect to design has been very risk averse. If you look at our competition, notably XYZ, they have continued to establish themselves as a very design focused website and that has been working wonders for them. We currently have over 200 links on our homepage. With such a huge number of potential pathways, we lose control over where the customer focuses. We need the right tradeoffs between a) what content is exposed to the user and b) how much content is the user exposed to? I think this is a fantastic opportunity for us to try something very bold. I am thinking of a homepage with less than 10 clickable elements! I just know it in my heart that it will do wonders.”

“The other day a couple of us were discussing how there is this shift in the web towards web 3.0 from web 2.0. Web 3.0 technologies³ have brought around huge changes specifically in the field of front-end design. Thanks to this shift, user interfaces have now become slicker than ever and have the potential for providing extremely light weight responsive experiences with very little code overhead. Just look at how social media sites from the valley have started to look like. Sites like Facebook are at the forefront of pushing the web 3.0 revolution. As the OTA market leader in India, we must also be pushing the envelope in terms of web design.”

Deepak reflected on the remarks by Dilip, UX Head:

Dilip has always been a very passionate and expressive member of the team. He fondly recollected how his review meetings were extremely detailed and covered a lot of minutiae around fonts, colors, shadows and composition. Deepak understood well the tough position of the UX head. Design tends to have a lot of subjectivity and while they do their best to make data driven decisions, it's not always easy. The slicker designs tend to need extra coding and it is hard to convince everyone to undertake a high effort approach when a 'lesser designed' alternative gets the job done. Deepak knew it was a fine balance and that design and interface were a very important part of what they were building and choosing sub-optimal designs over a period of time could quickly seep into MMT culture and products.

²Understanding Chinese Web Design: Why Are Sites So Incredibly Link Heavy?

<http://blog.webcertain.com/understanding-chinese-web-design-why-are-sites-so-incredibly-link-heavy/13/08/2012/>

<http://thenextweb.com/asia/2014/05/15/weibo-ceo-clutter-is-good-for-us-and-microblogging-can-thrive-alongside-messaging-apps/>

³- <http://www.uxbooth.com/articles/web-2-0-web-3-0-and-the-internet-of-things/>

Vijay Chatterjee (Analytics head):

“This is a big project. We would need to setup a fairly robust A/B experiment. We will need to ensure that we can show different variants of our test versions to small numbers from our audience iteratively till we identify the final winner. Think of it as being very similar to how the winner is chosen through the playoffs in any competitive tournament like the IPL or the soccer world cup. Irrespective of which two designs were compared initially, the better designs bubble up to the surface and move towards the final try out. With careful pairing, we might be able to reduce the time needed for the final winner. I will work out a plan once we have the contending designs. I would recommend that we restrict our options to a maximum of 4 variants. Every additional option would increase the cost of the experiment by at least 10 days.”

Ajay Singh (Product head):

“As Deepak mentioned in the beginning of this meeting, I have wanted to take up this project for over 6 months now. We have been refraining from touching the homepage largely with a “don’t mess with something that works” approach. But by looking at internal analytics data, customer feedback sessions and the approach taken by our competitors, I strongly feel that we might be missing out on some very real opportunities by not redesigning our site. I will set up multiple breakout sessions with each of your teams this week to get your inputs. I will also share some of the internal data analysis that we have conducted over the past few months.”

“Also, a major development that we need to watch out for is the emergence of the mobile platform⁴. While they still form a small percentage of the traffic to our website, they are showing robust growth on a MOM basis. One thing I am confident though is that our customers are not going to be comfortable booking tickets or carrying out transactions over a mobile phone!”

Deepak remembered reflecting on the remarks:

“I have heard this before, from a prominent venture capital investor whose firm has global investments including some very successful ones in China. China is typically considered to be 3-4 years ahead of India in technology trends. The investor has been warning Deepak of an impending change that would disrupt the technology space. There has been a lot of debate on how this would happen and if India and OTA space could really be affected by this.”

E-mail from Product Head, Ajay Singh

A new email buzz on Deepak’s mobile phone interrupted his thoughts about the meeting. The email was from the Product Head with the subject line “Meeting minutes and action plan for the homepage redesign” [Exhibit 4]. Deepak was happy with the three phases

⁴a: <http://www.gartner.com/newsroom/id/1963915>

b. <http://trak.in/tags/business/2012/08/22/india-china-smartphone-market-growth-comparison/>

c. <http://www.forbes.com/sites/elizabethwoyke/2011/12/06/twelve-2012-predictions-for-the-telecom-industry/>

outlined in the email. He responded by sending out a meeting invite to the team members for next week. It would be an important discussion.

Exhibit 1: MMT: 2013 (A)**MMT Background Information****Brief History of Make My Trip:**

MMT is an online travel company founded by Deepak Kumar, an alumnus of Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad. It was launched in the US in the year 2000 to cater to the US-India travel needs of the Indian community. By early 2000, the internet penetration in India increased. Along with this the Indian Railways Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) started providing online bookings for railway tickets and the low cost carriers had started entering the air travel industry in India. Taking advantage of these trends, MMT was launched in India in 2005 and it was regarded as a pioneer in the online travel in the country.

Over the years, the company broadened its portfolio of products and services through introduction of different offerings: hotels and holiday bookings (2006-07), bus ticket bookings (2008), rail ticket bookings (2009), and flight and hotel deals, both Indian and international (2009). Also, MMT made acquisitions in 2011 and 2012 in India, Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand.

MMT's comprehensive offerings coupled with the convenience of online transactions aided by great-value prices revolutionised the way Indians purchased travel services. In 2011, MMT created several travel related mobile phone apps to utilise the increasing penetration of mobile devices in India. MMT thus received a number of awards from various organizations including Best Travel Portal, Best Travel Facilitator in India, Best Mobile Strategy and Best Mobile Solution, Best Travel Innovator, etc. It was also the Winner of CNBC Travel Award(2013) and the Lonely Planet Travel Award for Best Travel Facilitator (2012 & 2013). A list of selected awards in recent years and a table showing growing business of MMT over the years are provided below.

Selected Awards and Partner Accolades in Recent Years

- 1. Outlook Traveller Award – Best Travel Portal (2013, 2012)**
- 2. ET Retail Awards - E-tailer of the Year (2013)**
- 3. Lonely Planet Travel Award – Best Travel Portal (2013, 2012)**
- 4. CNBC Awaaz Travel Award – Best Travel Portal (2013, 2009)**
- 5. Conde Nast Traveller Award – Favourite OTA (2013)**
- 6. PhocusWright Award for Most Innovative B2C Company (2013)**
- 7. Ascendas Website of the Year (2013)**
- 8. ICICI-Crisil Emerging India Awards (2013)**
- 9. Eyefortravel Award – Best Mobile Strategy and Best Mobile Solution (2012)**
- 10. Budgies Awards – Travel Innovator of the Year (2012)**
- 11. Consumer Superbrands India – Superbrand (2009)**
- 12. Galileo-Express Travel World – Best OTA Award (2007)**

Table 1: Growth of MMT Group (2008-09 to 2012-13)

(As reported in USD '000)

	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Gross bookings	313,310.8	465,876.2	742,455.1	992, 957.5	1,169,558.6
Revenue less service cost	68,551.7	83,560.2	124,721.4	196,599.3	228, 821.9
Revenue as per IFRS P&L	24,990.7	40,282.5	61,070.5	88,184.9	88,165.2
MMT Profit After tax	(7,348.2)	(6,207.0)	4,829.7	7,048.4	(27,589.1)

(As reported in /INR Crores: One Crore is 10 million)

Gross bookings	1,445.9	2,224.27	3,400.76	4,788.90	6,365.49
Revenue less service cost	316.35	398.95	571.28	948.17	1,245.40
Revenue as per IFRS P&L	115.33	192.32	279.73	425.3	479.85
MMT Profit After tax	(33.91)	(29.63)	22.12	33.99	(150.16)


Source: Company Records**Exhibit 2: MMT: 2013 (A)**

India Online and Total Travel Market (INR Crores), Channel, Segment Share and CAGR, 2011 & 2015			
	2011	2015	CAGR (2011-2015) (%)
Airline			
Online air	16,414	35,366	21
Total air market	41,674	66,855	13
Hotels			
Online hotel market	2,634	7,692	31
Total hotel market	23,943	34,966	10
Rail			
Online rail market	9,646	22,947	24
Total rail market	26,321	47,515	16
Online travel market (leisure/unmanaged)	29,614	66,909	23
Total travel market	94,699	154,357	13
Online as a share of total travel market (%)	31	43	-
Online Channel Share			
Supplier Websites	18,765	43,830	24
Online travel agencies	10,249	23,079	22
Supplier Website share of total online bookings (%)	65	66	-
OTA share of total online bookings (%)	35	34	-


Source: Phocuswright's Asia Pacific Online Travel Overview Sixth Edition

Exhibit 3: MMT: 2013 (A)

Home Page February 2013



new Checkout our new site!

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Holidays

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LTC Tours	Rs.-26,298--	Rs. 25,050
Kerala	Rs.-6,199--	Rs. 5,890
Kashmir	Rs.-8,299--	Rs. 7,582
Andaman	Rs.-27,999--	Rs. 7,890
		MORE

Outside India	from	Flight + Hotel
Dubai	Rs.-29,999*	Rs. 28,890
Thailand	Rs.-20,990*	Rs. 19,050
Egypt	Rs.-56,699*	Rs. 55,890
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Switzerland	Rs.-68,500*	Rs. 67,890
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Exhibit 4: MMT: 2013 (A)**Preliminary Studies for Issues Facing MMT Home Page**

To define the specific problems to be resolved, the product team had decided to conduct a few preliminary research studies: user response to the current site, usability study, surveys to find the strengths and weaknesses of the site and analysis of online feedback on user behavior. These studies were in addition to the ongoing brand equity studies conducted by MMT, that tracked: monthly top-of-mind recall, satisfaction score, consideration set for purchase, and ratings on brand image parameters.

Usability Study to Gauge the User's Expectations and Product's Discoverability:

Objective: To gauge the expectations from a website and to assess product/ service discoverability.

Sample size: 15-20 users of different age, gender and profession, familiar with OTA websites, and unfamiliar with OTA websites

Process:

- MMT website along with other competitive websites were exposed to the users
- Specific situations were given to the customers to gauge their ease and comfort with navigation and discoverability. For example:
 - o Search for a flight or hotel and share the experience
 - o What will you do if you want to cancel a ticket / login to the website?
- Specific questions were asked on the elements that they first notice on the websites and if it makes them happy, disappointed or irritated?
- What they liked and disliked about each website Which website they would like to use in future if needed and why?

To avoid bias, users were not made aware that the team of researchers was working for or belonged to Make My Trip.

Results:

- 11 out of 18 users mentioned that the MMT search widget is not getting prominence on the page.
- Almost all of them had a view that the widget is too cluttered – too small a widget to carry too many elements and it annoys them.
- 8 users were not even aware that there are separate tabs for hotels at the top and they use hotels tab on the widget itself, 5 users were aware of those tabs but were more comfortable with using widget tabs, remaining 5 users noticed top tabs and clicked there.
- 12 users were not happy that the homepage was full of banners.
- Too annoying and not expected from MMT – focus should be on search rather than pushing banners: 8 users
- Pushing cross-sell is okay, but banners are not the correct way (too many colors and CTA buttons don't look good): 4 users
- Banners look good as they communicate offers and holiday packages: 6 users
- 6 users didn't even scroll down the page and saw the upper fold only

Consumer Research Study to Find Strength and Weakness of Homepage

Sample size: 15-20 users: of different age, gender and profession, familiar with OTA websites, unfamiliar with OTA websites

Process: MMT website (Old and mocks for new) along with other competitive websites were exposed to the users and asked:

Questions asked: How would you compare the websites on a number of parameters (rating on the scale of 10)?

Sr. No.	Parameter	Result
1	Relevance of the content	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6 users said they don't want the information that is on the banners 11 users found the special offers section very useful
2	Design - User Interface & Navigation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Almost all the users mentioned about the old look and complicated navigation. Why 2 entry tabs for a product say 'hotels' (4 users)
3	Search experience	8 users complained about very small search widget as compared to other sites.
4	Relevance of the content:	9 users were dependent only on banners for other products. Didn't notice the top tabs
5	Clutter on the page – elements which irritate	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Too many colors and too many banners are annoying. Side banners and bottom banners are almost useless

Study of Homepage through Online Feedback:

Purpose: Feedback collected on website-design, post-sales queries, pre-sales queries, capture NPS on a 10-point scale once product-purchase done

Sample size: 100% visitors

Process: The survey was conducted to get the liking of the respondents to the website on the following parameters:

- o Relevance of the content
- o Design - User Interface & Navigation
- o Search experience
- o Products Discoverability
- o Clutter on the page – elements which irritate

Third party tools were used for collecting feedback in the surveys conducted on homepage Users. The user was asked: How would you like the website on the above parameters?

Overall Findings of the Pre-studies:

1. Product tabs (at the top of the page and on the widget): White tabs (top) on white background weren't getting much attention of users. This was backed by data as we found more users using tabs on widget rather than using tabs at the top.

2. Hero Banner: Being at the center of the page, the main banner on the page called as 'Hero Banner', was the premium marketing inventory getting the highest attention of the user. Click-Through Rate (total clicks received by the banner/total instances when the banner appears) on hero banner was highest (0.6%)

3. Special Offers Section: This section also used to be very helpful for marketing. Also, studies showed that users found these kinds of placements more informative rather than banners.

4. Side and Bottom Banners: These were the least effective banners with lowest CTR and caused irritation and annoyance to the visitors (studies confirm this).

Problem Areas based on Conclusions from the Pre-Studies:

On the basis of the above studies, it was concluded that:

- “Discoverability of the Make My Trip's offerings was an issue. For some users, the web-content didn't align with their needs and their feedback left for a big scope for improvementimprovement
- Several travel innovations in products/initiatives introduced by MMT for the first time in the industry, needed to expand their 'Reach' to the customers
- Most of the users didn't like the clutter on the page and expected a cleaner User Interface (UI) and better navigation. Too many ad banners were found to be pushing the products/offers. Many calls to action (CTA) buttons across banners on a single page were also NOT desirable.
- Instead of ad banners, prominence needed to be given to the search widget and the product tabs to let users search for what they want. The data analysis (MMT website) and trend across e-commerce industry showed that the click-through rates for [banner ads](#) have fallen over time. Users don't tend to respond to large banner ads as compared to text ads and other formats.

Exhibit 5: MMT:2013 (A):E Mail from Ajay, Head Product Team**Purpose of Redesign, Meeting Minutes and Action Plan for the Homepage Redesign**

To: L-team, Analytics head, Dushyant Arora, Manoj Jain,

Subject: Homepage re-design Meeting Minutes

Hi All,

Thank you for your time today and the productive discussion around homepage re-design. Following are the key notes and the next steps. The roles and responsibilities and broad timelines have been added in the attached document.

Purposes of Home Page Re-design

Given the importance of the website for their business, the following specific objectives have been decided regarding: *site identity; search; registration, credibility and trust; and appropriate space for all stake holders.*

Site identity and mission:

...the Home page has to inform the user about the use of the site. It also has to give an overview of what the site has to offer and how it is organised which can otherwise be achieved only by persistent navigation.

Search:

A website like MakeMyTrip needs to have a prominently displayed search widget on the home page. Easy access to each product search is a mandate.

Registration, Credibility, and Trust:

Access to account login should be visible upfront. Brand claims which address the trust factor and showcase brand credibility need to be highlighted. For some visitors, the home page is the only way the site gets to create a good impression.

Provide Appropriate Space for All Stakeholders:

Prominently promoted items on the home page tend to get significantly greater traffic. It is the most desirable real estate with limited acreage. Everybody, Product Managers of each individual product / service, who have a stake in the site want a promotional element or a link to their section on the home page, and the turf battles for home page visibility can be fierce.”

The Plan for the Project:The project will consist of three key phases-

Phase 1: Planning: 1 to 2 Months

Phase 1A: About 1 month: *Pre-analysis:* [Responsible- Homepage product & Analytics team]:

- a. Analyse the need for a new home page
- b. Decide on the success parameters
- c. Setup tracking requirements
- d. Generate broad options for re-design

Phase 1B: About 1 Month: *Planning, Layout, and Test Setup* [Responsible- Homepage product, Marketing team, UX, LOB product managers]

- e. Design of new layouts
- f. Finalise mocks for the options
- g. Set up A/B for the options

Phase 2: 3 to 4 Months: Testing Multiple Phases and Launch of LOB Landing Pages[Responsible-Homepage product, Analytics team, Tech team]

Phase 3: 3 Months: Gradual Launch of the Finalized Design[Responsible- Tech team, Analytics team, Homepage product]

- a. Traffic Increased by 25% for winning variant
- b. Traffic Increased slowly to 100% and design new LOB pages

Attachment 1: Roles & Responsibilities of Teams in Redesigning the Home Page and LOB's

Marketing Team:

Works with the homepage Product Manager on marketing requirements (impression share of all products on homepage real estate)

Homepage Product Manager:

- Coordinates with other product teams (Flights, Hotels, Holidays, Bus, Rail, Flight+Hotel) for improving search experience and marketing team to understand business requirements
- Works with User Experience (UX) and Research teams to understand user expectations and how to address them – Design, navigation, user flow.
- Works with Tech Team to ensure the robust framework for AB testing and the implementation of the changes – page performance, fast search experience, managing server hits/load on the page
- Overall project management – involved from the early planning stage till complete launch
- Analyses the results at every stage of the project – Analytics

Research Team:

- Conducts research and user studies to gauge user's expectation, competition analysis, what are the elements users are liking/disliking about MMT and other competitors.

UX Team:

- Works with homepage product managers to address user's expectations, new layout design, ad formats, colors/fonts, user navigation and flow across site while maintaining MMT brand consistency across site

Tech Team:

- Works with homepage product manager and UX team for implementation part. Responsible for page performance – tech aspects (site speed, functionality, managing server loads) and most importantly setting up a robust AB testing framework.

Different Product Teams:

- Work with homepage product manager on the expectations from homepage for their product. (search experience)
- Work with marketing team on the expected visibility on homepage (impression share of all products on homepage real estate)

Attachment 2: Timelines for the different phases

Mar'13

Sep'13

Phase 1- Planning, Options finalization, test set-up, customer research
(1-2 months)

Phase 3- Final option gradual roll-out
(3 months)

Phase 2- A/B testing, Launch of multiple variants, results compilation, final option selection
(3-4 months)

