

# Rodales.com Usability Study

## Summary Report

Kevin Knabe  
March 31, 2014

### **About the study**

This report summarizes a usability study of the Rodales.com website conducted March 18-24, 2014. The goal of the study was to identify areas for improvement in the site. We observed eight women shopping on the site. Participants were recruited through a post on the Women's Health Facebook page. All of the participants were American women between the ages of 30 and 50 with an annual household income of at least \$75,000. We conducted 45-minute interviews via phone and WebEx. During each session, the participant was allowed to spend \$75 on the site.

### **Perceptions of the Brand**

None of the participants were familiar with Rodale as an e-commerce brand. "Never heard of it." "The name was familiar, but I don't know why." "How long has this company been around? Are they a catalog company?" "They've been around since 1942? Why have I not heard of them?" "I thought Rodale was a publisher, so I'm very surprised."

Once they got familiar with the site, participants had positive reactions to the brand. "I like how a lot of it seems to be organic stuff. Looks like a lot of different kinds of stuff you wouldn't find in a typical store." "It's all eco-friendly and organic. That's great. Wow! I'm into health and wellness. This is my kind of thing." "You definitely have a lot of unique products. These are good gift ideas." "It seems to be geared to the holistic person who wants to take care of their whole being. I'm relating this to more of a Williams Sonoma. It seems like a high-end gift store." "There's so much cool stuff. It's kind of Anthropology mashed into Williams Sonoma mashed into Athleta. It's everything." "I like the site overall. There's definitely a market for this kind of stuff."

Most participants developed a sense of the brand gradually after they had browsed products for a few minutes. "I guess after

browsing around, this site is geared to people who like organic products? I understand that it's a healthy living organic site, but I don't know that that's obvious." "There are so many sites like this. What makes this different? I didn't realize until now that you have this 'Learn' tab. So this is where you give an overview of what all the products are about. It seems like it's buried." After clicking "Why Shop at Rodales?" in the footer, one woman commented, "You definitely have a lot [of certification] but I didn't know that until I went looking at the bottom of the screen."

Most of the participants commented that certain products seemed overpriced. "The prices, to be honest, are higher than I'd expect. I'm not sure I would spend 360 dollars on a woven rug. You could buy it at Target for substantially cheaper. I'm assuming that, based on the prices, these are more boutique-like brands." "I don't want to spend 90 dollars for a workout outfit. Are you all selling this stuff? I mean, who's buying this? I can understand the price, but I would not want to pay that much." "These are high-end things. It's not bargain shopping, but it's good stuff."

Some participants said that the product selection seemed limited. "I'm not very impressed with the home décor. There's not much at all." "I didn't feel like the product selection was that vast or that different from other brands that I'm familiar with. I'd like to see how their product selection will evolve."

Most participants liked the visual design. "It's a very attractive website. It's beautiful, very serene. I really do like the simplicity of the imagery. It's a pretty website, very pretty and special. The appearance of your site plays off the quality. "The images are great." "I like that you don't have anything that pops out at you."

A few thought the design was too understated visually. "[I don't like] the drabness of it. It's not very bold." "Once you're on the shopping page, it's kind of dull. I like it, but why is it so quiet?"

Others had similar comments about the products themselves, particularly the clothes. "They're cute. I just feel like they're something that a 45-year-old woman would wear." "Clothes should be prettier. All the women's clothing seems to be pretty neutral. Everything seems to be pretty similar. It all seems to have the same theme. I like color."

Participants responded favorably to the voice of the site and the emails. "'You're Wonderful'—that's sweet." "'Wonderful is on its way.' How nice is that? Very friendly!"

## **The Home Page**

None of the participants supplied an email address in the initial popup window. "I'm mildly annoyed that that screen popped up asking for my email address." "I never sign up for the daily emails because I get flooded with things." "I just click out of it unless you offer free shipping or ten percent off or some kind of incentive."

Several participants said they liked the colorful imagery at the top of the home page. "I like the graphic." "The flower is nice." "I like the fact that the front page is super bright."

Only three of the eight participants initially scrolled the home page, and only two clicked links on the home page. No one clicked the tabs labeled "Top Sellers" or "Spring Favorites." "This looks really busy. It's kind of like, 'Ahh! I don't know what to look at!' There's so much! It's jumble of products. I prefer to stick up here [in the menu] with the places I'm actually looking for." "It looks like Pinterest. I'm looking at the top bar at all the categories."

### *Recommendations:*

- Present a definition of the brand at the top of the home page.
- Organize the content of the home page into sections.

Search

**RODALE'S**  
Inspired design meets healthy living

♥ 0 0 [Checkout](#)

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[NEW ARRIVALS](#) [TOP SELLERS](#) [SPRING FAVORITES](#)



Wire-Wrapped Luminous Herkimer Diamond Studs  
Ariana Cat



Farmers Market Produce Bags – Set of 2  
Oh, Little Rabbit



Soothing Organic Bath Salts  
Captain Blankenship



— shop —  
GARDEN GIFTS



Classic Face Sunscreen SPF 30  
COOLA Suncare



Organic Buzz Spray Bug Repellent  
Erbaviva



Nadia Chambray Button-Front Shirt  
Gramicci



— shop —  
YOGA GEAR



Flip-Cap Water Bottle – 22 oz  
Lifefactory

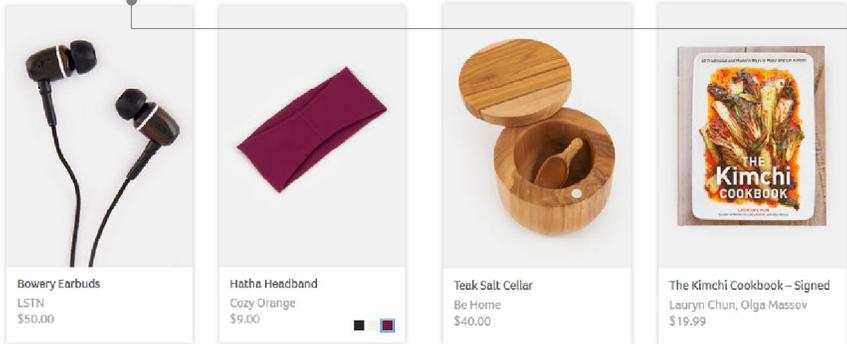




Definition of the brand

New Arrivals

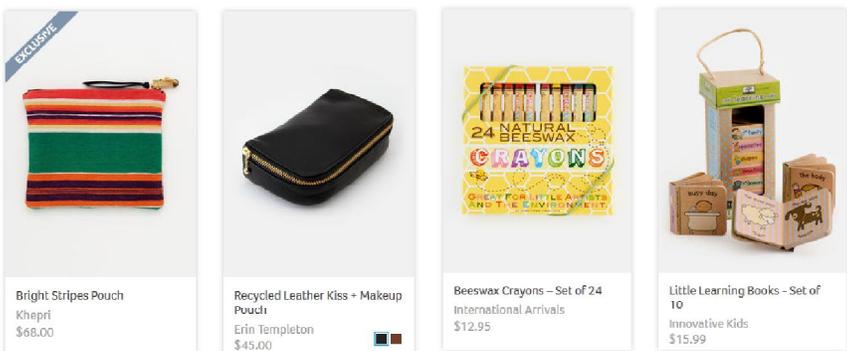
[See All New Arrivals](#)



Page organized in sections

Top Sellers

[See All Top Sellers](#)



Spring Favorites

[See All Spring Favorites](#)



Home Page Recommendations

## Product Browsing

Participants had little difficulty using the menus and no difficulty at all navigating the main category pages. "I like the layout. It's easy to peruse. I know that you have the options on the left. I think this makes a lot of sense—the way you've filtered the categories."

Some participants said that the subcategory pages seemed unorganized. "It looks like everything is mixed in. That might be a little different." "The teak spoon set is several rows away from the forks." "It's not very organized. There's one jar of honey here and another jar of honey there. It would make more sense to bundle similar products together."

In some cases, participants had difficulty knowing how many products were in a subcategory. "Is this everything here? There's not another page? I was a little confused. I wasn't looking at everything. Is that all the candles you have? [Then, after more items popped in to the bottom of the page.] Okay."

Several users said they didn't like the bottomless scroll. "It's loading. I like to see the stuff at the bottom of the page. See, it does it again. The screen sort of blips." "I don't know what it's called when it auto-populates at the bottom, but sometimes I might leave before it pops in." "It slows you down a little bit." "That is a little annoying for me. It doesn't show up right away. There's a lag." "[It] bugs me. If I go to a page, I don't want to have to pause and wait."

On the Sale page, which unlike the other category pages does not feature a list of subcategories, one user scrolled through 15 screenfuls of products before realizing she could click subcategories on the left.

Most users responded favorably to the related editorial content. "I like that they integrated the workout into the product page." "I really like that little bar in the middle. There's a running plan for beginners. There's information that can help you if this is what you're interested in. I would watch the video." "I like how you have a recipe. That's a good idea."

Several users said that the editorial content seemed out-of-place in the middle of the page. "I'm confused now. You have that thing in the middle again. 'Pretty pet essentials.' Don't throw it in the middle of my shopping experience. It kind of interrupted my shopping flow. I want to shop. I don't want to hear the editor's

opinion." "I noticed that little middle thing. I wouldn't pay any attention to it." "It doesn't really pop out at you. I feel I could easily scroll right past it." "It's interesting that you have it in the middle of the page. I am expecting to see products. Usually they have stuff like that on the top or the side." "Now that you asked me, I think it would be better at the top."

Some users asked for better ways of navigating by brand and learning about brands. "I like that you can sort out by brands. It would be nice if you could click the brand name." "A lot of these brands I've never heard of." "I'm going to click one of these brands [in the left nav] like Red Pig. But I don't see anything about why Red Pig is a featured brand."

Two users commented that the italic text below the page title was not noticeable or easy to read. "This [text] that I just highlighted is not obvious enough." "The font is kind of ugly."

On subcategory pages, on products with multiple color options, when users moused over alternate colors, the alternate product images did not appear. "The image isn't coming up when I hover over the other colors." This is evidently a bug.

#### *Recommendations:*

- Organize the subcategory pages into sections based on the third-level categories. For example, on the "Home Décor" page, present categories for "Rugs," "Pillows," and "Candles."
- Display the number of items within each category.
- Consider replacing the bottomless scroll interface with a pagination interface.
- Place the editorial module at the top of the page.
- Present subcategories on the "Sale" page.
- Make the brand names clickable.
- On the by-brand views, include an "About this Brand" module.
- Use a more readable font for the page subhead.
- Fix the bug for showing alternate product images on mouseovers.

Search

0 0 Checkout

Beauty & Care Apparel Accessories Fitness Food & Cooking Home & Garden Baby & Kids Pets Gifts Sale Learn

New Arrivals Bed & Bath Home Décor Tabletop Cleaning & Homekeeping Garden Books Stationery & Cards Sale

Shop by Category

- New Arrivals
- Bed & Bath
  - Sheets
  - Duvets, Throws & Spreads
  - Pillows & Fillers
  - Bedding Décor
  - Towels
  - Bath Curtains, Mats & Décor
- Home Décor
  - Rugs
  - Candles
  - Pillows & Throws
- Tabletop
  - Glassware
  - Dinnerware & Serveware
  - Flatware & Utensils
  - Table Linens
  - Candles
- Cleaning & Homekeeping
- Garden
  - Shovel & Rakes
  - Gardening Tools & Accessories
  - Gardening Books
- Books
  - Cookbooks
  - Gardening Books
  - Fitness Books
  - Health & Wellness Books
  - Decorating Books
  - Children's Books
  - Hobby Books
  - Signed Books
- Stationery & Cards
  - Cards
  - Notebooks & Journals
  - Writing
- Sale
- View All

Home Décor

Master the art of interior design in a snap by decorating with eco-friendly, sustainably sourced, and organic rugs, blankets, pillows, candles, and more

Order: Top Sellers



Wide Hanging Lantern  
TAG  
\$28.00



Scented Soy Votive  
Be Home  
\$12.00  
4 scents available



Essential Oil Scented Pillar Candle  
Lite + Cycle  
\$36.00



Aviary Unscented Soy Candle  
Mine Design  
\$32.00



2" Woodstack Candle  
Peg and Awl  
\$14.00



Tall Hanging Lantern  
TAG  
\$34.00

Shop by Room

- Bedroom
- Bathroom
- Kitchen & Housewares

Shop Featured

- Shilpa Rathi
- Red Pig
- Coyuchi
- Schlossberg Switzerland
- Down to Earth
- RS Handmade



Simple, Cheerful Decor

Bring warmth and cheer into your home with our all-natural candles, plus easy styling ideas

GET THE TIPS

Narrow by clear all

- BRAND +
- COLOR +
- SIZE +



Essential Oil Scented Pillar Candle  
Lite + Cycle  
\$36.00



Essential Oil Scented Pillar Candle  
Lite + Cycle  
\$36.00



Scented Soy Candle  
Be Home  
\$22.00  
2 scents available



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**Shop by Category**

- New Arrivals
- Bed & Bath
  - Sheets
  - Duvets, Throws & Spreads
  - Pillows & Fillers
  - Bedding Décor
  - Towels
  - Bath Curtains, Mats & Décor
- Home Décor
  - Rugs
  - Candles
  - Pillows & Throws
- Tabletop
  - Glassware
  - Dinnerware & Serveware
  - Flatware & Utensils
  - Table Linens
  - Candles
- Cleaning & Homekeeping
- Garden
  - Shovel & Rakes
  - Gardening Tools & Accessories
  - Gardening Books
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  - Gardening Books
  - Fitness Books
  - Health & Wellness Books
  - Decorating Books
  - Children's Books
  - Hobby Books
  - Signed Books
- Stationery & Cards
  - Cards
  - Notebooks & Journals
  - Writing
- Sale
- View All

**Shop by Room**

- Bedroom
- Bathroom
- Kitchen & Housewares

**Shop Featured**

- Shilpa Rathi
- Red Pig
- Coyuchi
- Schlossberg Switzerland
- Down to Earth
- RS Handmade

**Narrow by** [clear all](#)

- BRAND [+](#)
- COLOR [+](#)
- SIZE [+](#)

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Master the art of interior design in a snap by decorating with eco-friendly, sustainably sourced, and organic rugs, blankets, pillows, candles, and more

Home & Garden  
**Simple, Cheerful Decor**

Bring warmth and cheer into your home with our all-natural candles, plus easy styling ideas

[GET THE TIPS](#)

**Rugs** [See All Rugs \(8\)](#)

- Black & Blue Woven Rug**  
Design Legacy  
\$360.00
- Triple Diamond Bath Rug**  
Coyuchi  
\$360.00
- Wave Bath Rug**  
Coyuchi  
\$63.00

**Pillows and Throws** [See All Pillows and Throws \(12\)](#)

- Diamond Crochet Pillow**  
Coyuchi  
\$72.00
- Roman Key Pillow**  
Coyuchi  
~~\$126.00~~ \$79.99
- Graphic Matelassé Pillow**  
Coyuchi  
\$86.00

**Candles** [See All Candles \(15\)](#)

- Wildharvested White Sage Smudge stick**  
Juniper Ridge  
\$10.00
- Wildharvested Sweetgrass Incense Braid**  
Juniper Ridge  
\$15.00
- Scented Soy Votive**  
Be Home  
\$12.00  
4 scents available

More readable font for subhead

Editorial content at top of page

Page sections based on third-level product categories

Clickable brand names

Subcategory Page Recommendations

## Product Details

Participants used the top half of the product detail page effectively, and responded to it positively. "This to the left—these cute little tidbits—are good. It's good that you don't have to read the entire description." "I like that you can automatically get a close-up shot of something without having to click another button. I like a lot that it tells where the item is made."

Some participants didn't notice the sections that were collapsed. "I would be interested in the ingredients of these products." "I didn't notice this 'Meet the Creator.'" "'Why We Chose It.' I never knew it was there."

None of the participants clicked products in the "You Might Also Like" section. "I noticed them, but I'm not really interested in them." "I saw that, but it didn't really make sense when it said, 'You might like this.' It didn't really add up. Like, it's showing me organic shampoo when I'm looking at organic bug spray."

No one clicked the "More..." or "Recently Viewed Items" tabs.

Two participants were confused when the "Add to Cart" button was disabled because they had not selected a size or color from a pre-requisite dropdown menu. "Why are you not letting me add to my basket? I'm clicking on it. It's not letting me." "My computer froze. What happened? That's weird. It would have been nice to have a prompt that says, 'Please choose the size.'"

Two participants were required to choose a size from a dropdown menu, even though only one size was available. "They both say 16." (This happened on the "Dish Soap" product.)

Most participants did not notice the Q&A section at the bottom of the page, and those who did didn't use it. "If I had seen that, it still wouldn't have answered my question—because somebody asked that question two weeks ago and it's still not answered." "I'm not going to ask a question and wait a day." "If I have to type in my question, that's not really what I'm looking for." "When you ask a question from an owner or expert, you know you're going to get a biased answer. I would rather have user reviews."

Several participants said they wanted to read user reviews. "I was looking for product reviews." "I really wish you had ratings. I use ratings all the time. People want to know what other people think of products. I've never heard of any of these brands." "It would be better if there was a tab that said 'Reviews.'" "I don't see that

people have reviewed your products, so I don't know how people like them. For example, with the sunscreen, does it cake? Reviews always help. Like I said, the reviews, it would be nice to know if they do hold up. For me the most important things is reviews."

Two users wanted a size chart for clothing. "There's no size chart on here. Not all larges are the same sizes. I would be hesitant to buy these online because I might have to exchange them." "I don't see your sizing. It would be helpful if there was little link right there [at the top of the product detail page]."

One user commented, "It would be nice if it popped up on the side 'Things That You've Recently Looked At.'" This suggestion seems to be consistent with the shopping process; in all of the sessions, participants found items they liked, then had to go back and find them again to put them in their carts.

Two users said they would like to see photographs of clothing on models. "The sites that I go to have pictures of people using things." "It helps to see the product on a person."

#### *Recommendations:*

- Present user reviews.
- Expand the "Ingredients" and "Meet the Creator" sections.
- Tighten the relevance of the "You Might Also Like" suggestions by choosing products from the same category.
- Use smaller images in the "You Might Also Like Section" to minimize the barrier between the top and bottom of the page.
- Display "Recently Viewed Items."
- Present a size chart link at the top of clothing pages.
- Fix the bug in the dropdown menu of the "Dish Soap" page (and on other products, if the problem is systemic).

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- 100% organic cotton
- Traditional loom handwoven by Indian artisans
- Soft, washable, stylish

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## Striped Dinner Napkin Set

Shilpa Rathi  
\$38.00

Color [HAVE A QUESTION?](#)

Size: 22" x 22" Quantity:

[♡ FAVORITE](#) [🛒 ADD TO BASKET](#)

**DETAILS**

Organic cotton napkins are handwoven by Indian artisans on a traditional handloom to create an eye-pleasing palette of dimensional stripes that will brighten up any table. Due to the napkins' handmade nature, natural variations may occur.

- 100% organic cotton
- 22" x 22"
- Set of 4 napkins
- Hand wash recommended
- Imported

**WHY WE CHOSE IT**

These lovely napkins are handwoven from organic cotton grown without pesticides or herbicides.

**MEET THE CREATOR**

Item # E001071004

[MORE TABLE LINENS](#) [YOU MIGHT ALSO LIKE](#) [RECENTLY VIEWED ITEMS](#)

Wire-wrapped Luminous Herkimer Diamond Studs  
\$58.00

Circle Cardigan  
~~\$240.00~~ \$59.99

Cashmere V-Neck Sweater  
~~\$200.00~~ \$59.99

Alry Aquamarine Studs  
\$275.00

### QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

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No questions have been asked about this item. Be the first!

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New Arrivals | Bed & Bath | Home Décor | **Tabletop** | Cleaning & Homekeeping | Garden | Books | Stationery & Cards | Sale

- 100% organic cotton
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- Soft, washable, stylish

Like

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### Striped Dinner Napkin Set

Shilpa Rathi

\$38.00

[HAVE A QUESTION?](#)

Color

Size: 22"x22" Quantity: 1

FAVORITE ADD TO BASKET

**DETAILS**

Organic cotton napkins are handwoven by Indian artisans on a traditional handloom to create an eye pleasing palette of dimensional stripes that will brighten up any table. Due to the napkins' handmade nature, natural variations may occur.

- 100% organic cotton
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- Set of 4 napkins
- Hand wash recommended
- Imported

**WHY WE CHOSE IT**

These lovely napkins are handwoven from organic cotton grown without pesticides or herbicides.

**MEET THE CREATOR**

Shilpa Rathi offers the finest in eco-friendly home décor and accessories. Handcrafted by Indian artisans, each product is handmade from naturally available materials and organic cotton, using techniques of hand block printing and handweaving, as well as supporting fair trade practices.

**RECENTLY VIEWED ITEMS**

**YOU MIGHT ALSO LIKE**

**Summary of Customer Ratings & Reviews**

Customer Reviews ★★★★★ 4 out of 6

44 reviews (31 out of 44 customers recommend this product to a friend.)

[Write A Review](#)

Item #: F001071004

December 1, 2013

**Customers not aware**

Bellingham, WA

Would You Recommend? No

2 of 3 found this review helpful. I found this review helpful Not helpful Report as inappropriate

Share this Review: [Facebook](#) [Twitter](#)

Comment on this Review

July 28, 2013

**Been using these for years**

DALEK, Berkeley, NM

Would You Recommend? Yes

1 of 1 found this review helpful. I found this review helpful Not helpful Report as inappropriate

Share this Review: [Facebook](#) [Twitter](#)

Comment on this Review

**QUESTIONS & ANSWERS**

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QUESTIONS THAT NEED ANSWERS | MY Q&A

Get Answers From Owners And Experts

Type in your question. (We'll show if it matches any that were already asked.)

[Hide answers](#) | [Sort by](#) [Best question](#)

No questions have been asked about this item. Be the first!

Recently Viewed Items visible

Smaller images, and recommendations from the same product category

All content expanded

User reviews

Product Page Recommendations

## **Search**

Most participants did not use the search feature because they were not looking for anything specific.

One user searched for “wine bottle opener” and got the message, “There are no results for wine bottle opener in products.”

Another user searched for “pitcher” and went directly to the product page for “Tropic Star Organic Pitcher-Ready Iced Tea.”

## **Favorites**

All of the participants recognized the favorites feature. Most of them did not use the feature because they had no reason to, and didn't want to create an account in the middle of the shopping process. One user did create account and used the Favorites feature without difficulty.

## **The Shopping Basket and Checkout**

All of the participants were able to check out without difficulty. “Putting things into the cart is easy.” “I thought the checkout was relatively consistent with everywhere else.” “It was completely normal, seamless, pain-free.”

Six participants used the “Checkout as Guest” option. Two created accounts.

Two participants wanted to see what was in the Shopping Basket, and inadvertently clicked to go the Checkout instead. “Maybe put a space between the cart and checkout so it doesn't look like one button.”

Only one participant filled in anything on the “Why Did You Choose This” popup window. “There's no incentive to do this.”

## **Checking Account Status**

After placing an order, participants were asked to check the status of the order. Because most of them had not created an account, they completed this task by referring to the order number in the confirmation email. All of them were able to complete the task successfully.

## Debriefing Responses

At the end of each session, participants were asked a series of questions.

<i>Question</i>	<i>Avg.</i>
How likely would you be to make another purchase from Rodales.com? 1 is "Not at All Likely" and 5 is "Very Likely."	3.75
If 1 is "difficult" and 5 is "easy," how would you rate this site?	4.50
If 1 is "incomplete" and 5 is "complete," how would you rate this site?	3.75
If 1 is "expensive" and 5 is "inexpensive," how would you rate this site?	2.13
If 1 is "not relevant to me" and 5 is "relevant to me," how would you rate this site?	3.87
If 1 is "unattractive" and 5 is "attractive," how would you rate this site?	4.00