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AdSense

Google AdSense

	
Developer(s)	Google Inc.
Initial release	June 18, 2003 ^[1]
Operating system	Cross-platform (web-based application)
Type	Online advertising
Website	www.google.com/adsense ^[2]

Google AdSense is a program run by Google Inc. that allows publishers in the Google Network of content sites to serve automatic text, image, video, and rich media adverts that are targeted to site content and audience. These adverts are administered, sorted, and maintained by Google, and they can generate revenue on either a per-click or per-impression basis. Google beta tested a cost-per-action service, but discontinued it in October 2008 in favor of a DoubleClick offering (also owned by Google).^[3] In Q1 2011, Google earned US\$2.43 billion (\$9.71 billion annualized), or 28% of total revenue, through Google AdSense.^[4]

Overview

Google uses its Internet search technology to serve advertisements based on website content, the user's geographical location, and other factors. Those wanting to advertise with Google's targeted advertisement system may enroll through Google AdWords. AdSense has become a popular company in creating and placing banner advertisements on a website, because the advertisements are less intrusive than most banners, and the content of the advertisements is often relevant to the website.

Many websites use AdSense to monetize their content; it is the most popular advertising network. AdSense has been particularly important for delivering advertising revenue to small websites that do not have the resources for developing advertising sales programs and sales people to generate revenue with. To fill a website with advertisements that are relevant to the topics discussed, webmasters place a brief HTML code on the websites' pages. Websites that are content-rich have been very successful with this advertising program, as noted in a number of publisher case studies on the AdSense website. AdSense publishers may only place three ad units per page.

Some webmasters put significant effort into maximizing their own AdSense income. They do this in three ways:

1. They use a wide range of traffic-generating techniques, including but not limited to online advertising.
2. They build valuable content on their websites that attracts AdSense advertisements, which pay out the most when they are clicked.
3. They use text content on their websites that encourages visitors to click on advertisements. Note that Google prohibits webmasters from using phrases like "Click on my AdSense ads" to increase click rates. The phrases accepted are "Sponsored Links" and "Advertisements".

The source of all AdSense income is the AdWords program, which in turn has a complex pricing model based on a Vickrey second price auction. AdSense commands an advertiser to submit a sealed bid (i.e., a bid not observable by competitors). Additionally, for any given click received, advertisers only pay one bid increment above the second-highest bid. Google currently shares 68% of revenue generated by AdSense with content network partners, and 51% of revenue generated by AdSense with AdSense for Search partners.^[5]

History

Oingo, Inc., a privately held company located in Los Angeles, was started in 1998 by Gilad Elbaz and Adam Weissman. Oingo developed a proprietary search algorithm that was based on word meanings and built upon an underlying lexicon called WordNet, which was developed over the previous 15 years by researchers at Princeton University, led by George Miller.^[6]

Oingo changed its name to Applied Semantics in 2001,^[7] which was later acquired by Google in April 2003 for US\$102 million.^[8]

In 2009, Google AdSense announced that it would now be offering new features, including the ability to "enable multiple networks to display ads".

Types

AdSense for Feeds

In May 2005, Google announced a limited-participation beta version of **AdSense for Feeds**, a version of AdSense that runs on RSS and Atom feeds that have more than 100 active subscribers. According to the Official Google Blog, "advertisers have their ads placed in the most appropriate feed articles; publishers are paid for their original content; readers see relevant advertising—and in the long run, more quality feeds to choose from."^[9]

AdSense for Feeds works by inserting images into a feed. When the image is displayed by a RSS reader or Web browser, Google writes the advertising content into the image that it returns. The advertisement content is chosen based on the content of the feed surrounding the image. When the user clicks the image, he or she is redirected to the advertiser's website in the same way as regular AdSense advertisements.

AdSense for Feeds remained in its beta state until August 15, 2008, when it became available to all AdSense users.

AdSense for search

A companion to the regular AdSense program, **AdSense for search**, allows website owners to place Google Custom Search boxes on their websites. When a user searches the Internet or the website with the search box, Google shares 51% of the advertising revenue it makes from those searches with the website owner.^[5] However the publisher is paid only if the advertisements on the page are clicked; AdSense does not pay publishers for regular searches. Web publishers have reported that they also pay a range from \$0.64 to \$0.88 per click.

AdSense for mobile content

AdSense for mobile content allows publishers to generate earnings from their mobile websites using targeted Google advertisements. Just like AdSense for content, Google matches advertisements to the content of a website — in this case, a mobile website. Instead of traditional JavaScript code, technologies such as PHP, ASP and others are used.

AdSense for domains

AdSense for domains allows advertisements to be placed on domain names that have not been developed. This offers domain name owners a way to monetize domain names that are otherwise dormant or not in use. AdSense for domains is currently being offered to all AdSense publishers, but it wasn't always available to all.

On December 12, 2008, *TechCrunch* reported that AdSense for Domains is available for all US publishers.^[10]

AdSense for video

AdSense for video allows publishers with video content to generate revenue using ad placements from Google's extensive Advertising network including popular YouTube videos.^[11]

How AdSense works

- The webmaster inserts the AdSense JavaScript code into a webpage.
- Each time this page is visited, the JavaScript code uses inlined JSON to display content fetched from Google's servers.
- For contextual advertisements, Google's servers use a cache of the page to determine a set of high-value keywords. If keywords have been cached already, advertisements are served for those keywords based on the AdWords bidding system. (More details are described in the AdSense patent ^[12].)
- For site-targeted advertisements, the advertiser chooses the page(s) on which to display advertisements, and pays based on cost per mille (CPM), or the price advertisers choose to pay for every thousand advertisements displayed.^{[13][14]}
- For referrals, Google adds money to the advertiser's account when visitors either download the referred software or subscribe to the referred service.^[15] The referral program was retired in August 2008.^[16]
- Search advertisements are added to the list of results after the visitor performs a search.
- Because the JavaScript is sent to the Web browser when the page is requested, it is possible for other website owners to copy the JavaScript code into their own webpages. To protect against this type of fraud, AdSense customers can specify the pages on which advertisements should be shown. AdSense then ignores clicks from pages other than those specified.

Abuse

Some webmasters create websites tailored to lure searchers from Google and other engines onto their AdSense website to make money from clicks. Such websites often contain nothing but a large amount of interconnected, automated content (e.g., a directory with content from the Open Directory Project, or scraper websites relying on RSS feeds for content). Possibly the most popular form of such "AdSense farms" are splogs (spam blogs), which are centered around known high-paying keywords. Many of these websites use content from other websites, such as Wikipedia, to attract visitors. These and related approaches are considered to be search engine spam and can be reported to Google.^[17]

A Made for AdSense (MFA) website or webpage has little or no content, but is filled with advertisements so that users have no choice but to click on advertisements. Such pages were tolerated in the past, but due to complaints, Google now disables such accounts.

There have also been reports of Trojan horses engineered to produce counterfeit Google advertisements that are formatted looking like legitimate ones. The Trojan uploads itself onto an unsuspecting user's computer through a webpage and then replaces the original advertisements with its own set of malicious advertisements.^[18]

Criticism

According to critics, AdSense is one of the worst publisher programs. Many cases were reported about the accounts being disabled once a publisher reaches the minimum payout amount of \$100. Publishers will only get an automated email which says that their site is a threat to the advertisers and other publishers. The email contains a link to the help forum which is unlikely to get the account reinstated, even if their account was disabled in error. About 99% affected publishers say that their account has not been reinstated, and they believe that the termination was done in error. Critics accuse AdSense of being the only publisher program with discrimination based on country and caste of its publishers. There have been numerous complaints reported about the difference in treatment that a publisher is

receiving from Asia against one from the US.^[19] Due to alleged concerns about click fraud, Google AdSense has been criticized by some search engine optimization firms as a large source of what Google calls "invalid clicks", in which one company clicks on a rival's search engine advertisements to drive up the other company's costs.^[20]

To help prevent click fraud, AdSense publishers can choose from a number of click-tracking programs. These programs display detailed information about the visitors who click on the AdSense advertisements. Publishers can use this to determine whether or not they have been a victim of click fraud. There are a number of commercial tracking scripts available for purchase.

The payment terms for webmasters have also been criticized.^[21] Google withholds payment until an account reaches US\$100,^[22] but many micro content providers require a long time—years in some cases—to build up this much AdSense revenue. However, Google will pay all earned revenue greater than US\$10 when an AdSense account is closed and not disabled. On the other side Google bills its customers (API users for example) monthly, in increments as low as a few cents.

Many website owners complain that their AdSense accounts have been disabled just before they were supposed to receive their first paycheck from Google. Google claims accounts have been disabled due to click fraud or forbidden content, but have offered no proof of this. An automated email is sent to the publisher's owner which offers no reasoning, or options but a link to file an appeal. In the email, Google states that "Because we have a responsibility to protect our AdWords advertisers from inflated costs due to invalid activity, we've found it necessary to disable your AdSense account. Your outstanding balance and Google's share of the revenue will both be fully refunded back to the affected advertisers." The revenue generated - whether legitimate or not - is taken, and all complaints are deferred.^[23]

Google came under fire when the official Google AdSense Blog showcased the French video website Imineo.com. This website violated Google's AdSense Program Policies by displaying AdSense alongside sexually explicit material. Typically, websites displaying AdSense have been banned from showing such content.^[24] Some sites have been banned for distributing copyrighted material even when they hold the copyright themselves or are authorized by the copyright holder to distribute the material.^[25]

It has been reported that using both AdSense and AdWords may cause a website to pay Google a commission when the website advertises itself.^[26]

In some cases, AdSense displays inappropriate or offensive ads. For example, in a news story about a terrorist attack in India, an advert was generated for a (presumably non-existent) educational qualification in terrorism.^[27]

AdSense uses tracking cookies that are viewed by some users as a threat to privacy.^[28] Webmasters that use AdSense must place the appropriate warning in the privacy policy page.^[29]

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- Inside AdSense (<http://adsense.blogspot.com/>) — Google's official weblog on AdSense

Article marketing

Article marketing is a type of advertising in which businesses write short articles about themselves as a marketing strategy. A primary style for the articles includes a *bio box* and *byline* (collectively known as the resource box) about the business.

Traditional Article Marketing

Article marketing has been used by professionals for nearly as long as mass print has been available. A business provides content to a newspaper, possibly on a timely topic such as an article on tax audits during tax season, and the newspaper may use the article and include the business's name and contact information. Newspapers and other traditional media have limited budgets for gathering content and these articles may be used in the business section of the newspaper.

Internet Article Marketing

Internet article marketing is used to promote products and services online via article directories. Article directories with good web page ranks receive a lot of site visitors and are may be considered authority sites by search engines, leading to high traffic. These directories then go on PageRank to the author's website and in addition send traffic from readers.

Internet marketers attempt to maximize the results of an article advertising campaign by submitting their articles to a number of article directories. However, most of the major search engines filter duplicate content to stop the identical content material from being returned multiple times in searches. Some marketers attempt to circumvent this filter by creating a number of variations of an article, known as article spinning. By doing this, one article can theoretically acquire site visitors from a number of article directories.

Most forms of search engine optimization and internet marketing require a domain, internet hosting plan, and promoting budget. However, article advertising makes use of article directories as a free host and receives traffic by way of organic searches due to the listing's search engine authority.

The primary goal behind article marketing is to get search engine traffic and authors generally incorporate relevant keywords or keyphrases in their articles.

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Behavioral targeting

Behavioral Targeting refers to a range of technologies and techniques used by online website publishers and advertisers which allows them to increase the effectiveness of their campaigns by capturing data generated by website and landing page visitors.

When a consumer visits a web site, the pages they visit, the amount of time they view each page, the links they click on, the searches they make and the things that they interact with, allow sites to collect that data, and other factors, create a 'profile' that links to that visitor's web browser. As a result, site publishers can use this data to create defined audience segments based upon visitors that have similar profiles. When visitors return to a specific site or a network of sites using the same web browser, those profiles can be used to allow advertisers to position their online ads in front of those visitors who exhibit a greater level of interest and intent for the products and services being offered. On the theory that properly targeted ads will fetch more consumer interest, the publisher (or 'seller') can charge a premium for these ads over random advertising or ads based on the context of a site.

Behavioral marketing can be used on its own or in conjunction with other forms of targeting based on factors like geography, demographics or contextual web page content. It's worth noting that many practitioners also refer to this process as 'Audience Targeting'.

Onsite Behavioral Targeting

Behavioral targeting techniques may also be applied to any online property on the premise that it either improves the visitor experience or it benefits the online property, typically through increased conversion rates or increased spending levels. The early adopters of this technology/philosophy were editorial sites such as HotWired^{[1][2]}, online advertising^[3] with leading online ad servers^[4], retail or other e-commerce website as a technique for increasing the relevance of product offers and promotions on a visitor by visitor basis. More recently, companies outside this traditional e-commerce marketplace have started to experiment with these emerging technologies.

The typical approach to this starts by using web analytics to break-down the range of all visitors into a number of discrete channels. Each channel is then analyzed and a virtual profile is created to deal with each channel. These profiles can be based around Personas that gives the website operators a starting point in terms of deciding what content, navigation and layout to show to each of the different personas. When it comes to the practical problem of successfully delivering the profiles correctly this is usually achieved by either using a specialist content behavioral platform or by bespoke software development. Most platforms identify visitors by assigning a unique id cookie to each and every visitor to the site thereby allowing them to be tracked throughout their web journey, the platform then makes a rules-based decision about what content to serve.

Again, this behavioral data can be combined with known demographic data and a visitor's past purchase history in order to produce a greater degree of data points that can be used for targeting.

Self-learning onsite behavioral targeting systems will monitor visitor response to site content and learn what is most likely to generate a desired conversion event. Some good content for each behavioral trait or pattern is often established using numerous simultaneous multivariate tests. Onsite behavioral targeting requires relatively high level of traffic before statistical confidence levels can be reached regarding the probability of a particular offer generating a conversion from a user with a set behavioral profile. Some providers have been able to do so by leveraging its large user base, such as Yahoo!. Some providers use a rules based approach, allowing administrators to set the content and offers shown to those with particular traits.

Network Behavioral Targeting

Advertising Networks use behavioral targeting in a different way to individual sites. Since they serve many adverts across many different sites, they are able to build up a picture of the likely demographic makeup of internet users.^[5] An example would be a user seen on football sites, business sites and male fashion sites. A reasonable guess would be to assume the user is male. Demographic analyses of individual sites provided either internally (user surveys) or externally (Comscore \ netratings) allow the networks to sell audiences rather than sites.^[6] Although advertising networks used to sell this product, this was based on picking the sites where the audiences were. Behavioral targeting allows them to be slightly more specific about this.

Behavioral Targeting Tools

Some of the well known Behavioral targeting tools include:

- OmnitureSiteCatalyst
- Eloqua
- WebTrends
- Personyze
- Google Website Optimizer

Concerns

Many online users and advocacy groups are concerned about privacy issues around doing this type of targeting. This is a controversy that the behavioral targeting industry is trying to contain through education, advocacy and product constraints to keep all information non-personally identifiable or to obtain permission from end-users.^[7] AOL created animated cartoons in 2008 to explain to its users that their past actions may determine the content of ads they see in the future.^[8] Canadian academics at the University of Ottawa Canadian Internet Policy and Public Interest Clinic have recently demanded the federal privacy commissioner to investigate online profiling of Internet users for targeted advertising.^[9]

The European Commission (via commissioner Meglena Kuneva) has also raised a number of concerns related to online data collection (of personal data), profiling and behavioral targeting, and is looking for "enforcing existing regulation".^[10]

In October 2009 it was reported that a recent survey carried out by University of Pennsylvania and the Berkeley Center for Law and Technology found that a large majority of US internet users rejected the use of behavioral advertising.^[11] Several research efforts by academicians and others have demonstrated ^[12] that data that supposedly anonymized can be used to identify real individuals.

In March 2011, it was reported that the online ad industry would begin working with the Council of Better Business Bureaus to start policing itself as part of its program to monitor and regulate how marketers track consumers online, also known as behavioral advertising.^[13]

Case law

- In re DoubleClick
- FTC regulation of behavioral advertising

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Brand management

Brand management is the application of marketing techniques to a specific product, product line, or brand.

The discipline of brand management was started at Procter & Gamble as a result of a famous memo^[1] by Neil H. McElroy.^[2]

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Content marketing

Content marketing is an umbrella term encompassing all marketing formats that involve the creation and sharing of content in order to engage current and potential consumer bases. Content marketing subscribes to the notion that delivering high-quality, relevant and valuable information to prospects and customers drives profitable consumer action. Content marketing has benefits in terms of retaining reader attention and improving brand loyalty.^[1]

The idea of sharing content as a means of persuading decision-making has driven content marketers to make their once-proprietary informational assets available to selected audiences. Alternatively, many content marketers choose to create new information and share it via any and all media. Content marketing products frequently take the form of custom magazines, print or online newsletters, digital content, websites or microsites, white papers, webcasts/webinars, podcasts, video portals or series, in-person roadshows, roundtables, interactive online, email, events. The purpose of this information is not to spout the virtues of the marketer's own products or services, but to inform target customers and prospects about key industry issues, sometimes involving the marketer's products. The motivation behind content marketing is the belief that educating the customer results in the brand's recognition as a thought leader and industry expert.

Marketers may use content marketing as a means of achieving a variety of business goals. These may include: thought leadership, lead generation, increasing direct sales, introducing specific brand language and improving customer retention. The term "content engineer" is being used to describe a new breed of marketer who creates, optimizes, and distributes the different types of content required to engage customers on the social web, based on the data of many analysis tools.

Content marketing is the underlying philosophy driving techniques such as custom media, custom publishing, database marketing, brand marketing, branded entertainment and branded content.

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- Custom Content Council (<http://customcontentcouncil.com/>) - U.S. trade association of custom media and content marketing providers. (Formerly, Custom Publishing Council.)
- Content Marketing Trends (<http://www.slideshare.net/hschulze/b2b-content-marketing-report>) - Survey of over 500 marketing professionals on content marketing preferences
- Content Marketing Tips (<http://review-bonus.com/4-key-tips-for-great-content-marketing-how-to-video/>) - Read these 4 key tips to make great content marketing for your site.

Contextual advertising

Contextual advertising is a form of targeted advertising for advertisements appearing on websites or other media, such as content displayed in mobile browsers. The advertisements themselves are selected and served by automated systems based on the content displayed to the user.

How contextual advertising works

A contextual advertising system scans the text of a website for keywords and returns advertisements to the webpage based on what the user is viewing.^[1] The advertisements may be displayed on the webpage or as pop-up ads. For example, if the user is viewing a website pertaining to sports and that website uses contextual advertising, the user may see advertisements for sports-related companies, such as memorabilia dealers or ticket sellers. Contextual advertising is also used by search engines to display advertisements on their search results pages based on the keywords in the user's query.

Contextual advertising is a form of targeted advertising in which the content of an ad is in direct correlation to the content of the web page the user is viewing. For example, if you are visiting a website concerning travelling in Europe and see that an ad pops up offering a special price on a flight to Italy, that's contextual advertising. Contextual advertising is also called "In-Text" advertising or "In-Context" technology.^[2]

Apart from that when a visitor doesn't click on the ad in a go through time (a minimum time a user must click on the ad) the ad is automatically changed to next relevant ad showing the option below of going back to the previous ad.

Service providers

Google AdSense was the first major contextual advertising network. It works by providing webmasters with JavaScript code that, when inserted into webpages, displays relevant advertisements from the Google inventory of advertisers. The relevance is calculated by a separate Google bot, Mediabot, that indexes the content of a webpage. Recent technology/service providers have emerged with more sophisticated systems that use language-independent proximity pattern matching algorithm to increase matching accuracy.^[3]

Since the advent of AdSense, Yahoo! Publisher Network, Microsoft adCenter, Advertising.com Sponsored Listings (formerly Quigo) and others have been gearing up to make similar offerings.

Impact

Contextual advertising has made a major impact on earnings of many websites. Because the advertisements are more targeted, they are more likely to be clicked, thus generating revenue for the owner of the website (and the server of the advertisement). A large part of Google's earnings is from its share of the contextual advertisements served on the millions of webpages running the AdSense program.

Contextual advertising has attracted some controversy through the use of techniques such as third-party hyperlinking, where a third-party installs software onto a user's computer that interacts with the web browser.^[4] Keywords on a webpage are displayed as hyperlinks that lead to advertisers.

Agency roles

There are several advertising agencies that help brands understand how contextual advertising options affect their advertising plans. There are three main components to online advertising:^[4]

1. creation — what the advertisement looks like
2. media planning — where the advertisements are to be run
3. media buying — how the advertisements are paid for

Contextual advertising replaces the media planning component. Instead of humans choosing placement options, that function is replaced with computers facilitating the placement across thousands of websites.

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Email marketing

Email marketing is directly marketing a commercial message to a group of people using electronic mail email. In its broadest sense, every email sent to a potential or current customer could be considered email marketing. It usually involves using email to send ads, request business, or solicit sales or donations, and any email communication that is meant to build loyalty, trust or brand awareness. Email marketing can be done to either cold lists or current customer database. Broadly, the term is usually used to refer to:

- sending email messages with the purpose of enhancing the relationship of a merchant with its current or previous customers, to encourage customer loyalty and repeat business,
- sending email messages with the purpose of acquiring new customers or convincing current customers to purchase something immediately,
- adding advertisements to email messages sent by other companies to their customers

Researchers estimate that United States firms alone spent US \$1.51 billion on email marketing in 2011 and will grow to \$2.468 billion in 2016^[1].

Types of Email Marketing

Email marketing can be carried out through different types of emails;

Email Newsletters

Email Newsletters are direct emails sent out on a regular basis to a list of subscribers, customers. The primary purpose of an email newsletter is to build upon the relationship of the company with their customers/subscribers.

Transactional Emails

Transactional emails are usually triggered based on a customer's action with a company. Triggered transactional messages include dropped basket messages, purchase or order confirmation emails and email receipts.

The primary purpose of a transactional email is to convey information regarding the action that triggered it. But, due to its high open rates (51.3% compared to 36.6% for email newsletters^[2]), transactional emails are a golden opportunity to engage customers; to introduce or extend the email relationship with customers or subscribers, to anticipate and answer questions or to cross-sell or up-sell products or services^[3].

Many email newsletter software vendors offer transactional email support, which gives companies the ability to include promotional messages within the body of transactional emails. There are also software vendors that offer specialized transactional email marketing services, which include providing targeted and personalized transactional email messages and running specific marketing campaigns (such as customer referral programs).

Direct emails

Direct email involves sending an email solely to communicate a promotional message (for example, an announcement of a special offer or a catalog of products). Companies usually collect a list of customer or prospect email addresses to send direct promotional messages to, or they can also rent a list of email addresses from service companies.

Comparison to traditional mail

There are both advantages and disadvantages to using email marketing in comparison to traditional advertising mail.

Advantages

Email marketing (on the Internet) is popular with companies for several reasons:

- An exact return on investment can be tracked ("track to basket") and has proven to be high when done properly. Email marketing is often reported as second only to search marketing as the most effective online marketing tactic.^[4]
- Advertisers can reach substantial numbers of email subscribers who have opted in (i.e., consented) to receive email communications on subjects of interest to them.
- Almost half of American Internet users check or send email on a typical day^[5], with email blasts that are delivered between 1 a.m. and 5 a.m. outperforming those sent at other times in open and click rates^[6].
- Email is popular with digital marketers, rising an estimated 15% in 2009 to £292m in the UK.^[7]

Disadvantages

A report issued by the email services company Return Path, as of mid-2008 email deliverability is still an issue for legitimate marketers. According to the report, legitimate email servers averaged a delivery rate of 56%; twenty percent of the messages were rejected, and eight percent were filtered.^[8]

Companies considering the use of an email marketing program must make sure that their program does not violate spam laws such as the United States' Controlling the Assault of Non-Solicited Pornography and Marketing Act (CAN-SPAM),^[9] the European Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations 2003, or their Internet service provider's acceptable use policy.

Opt-in email advertising

Opt-in email advertising, or permission marketing, is a method of advertising via email whereby the recipient of the advertisement has consented to receive it. This method is one of several developed by marketers to eliminate the disadvantages of email marketing.^[10]

Opt-in email marketing may evolve into a technology that uses a handshake protocol between the sender and receiver.^[10] This system is intended to eventually result in a high degree of satisfaction between consumers and marketers. If opt-in email advertising is used, the material that is emailed to consumers will be "anticipated". It is assumed that the consumer wants to receive it, which makes it unlike unsolicited advertisements sent to the consumer. Ideally, opt-in email advertisements will be more personal and relevant to the consumer than untargeted advertisements.

A common example of permission marketing is a newsletter sent to an advertising firm's customers. Such newsletters inform customers of upcoming events or promotions, or new products.^[11] In this type of advertising, a company that wants to send a newsletter to their customers may ask them at the point of purchase if they would like to receive the newsletter.

With a foundation of opted-in contact information stored in their database, marketers can send out promotional materials automatically—known as Drip Marketing. They can also segment their promotions to specific market segments.^[12]

Legal requirements

In 2002 the European Union introduced the Directive on Privacy and Electronic Communications. Article 13 of the Directive prohibits the use of email addresses for marketing purposes. The Directive establishes the opt-in regime, where unsolicited emails may be sent only with prior agreement of the recipient.

The directive has since been incorporated into the laws of member states. In the UK it is covered under the Privacy and Electronic Communications (EC Directive) Regulations 2003^[13] and applies to all organisations that send out marketing by some form of electronic communication.

The CAN-SPAM Act of 2003 authorizes a US \$16,000 penalty per violation for spamming each individual recipient. Therefore, many commercial email marketers within the United States utilize a service or special software to ensure compliance with the Act. A variety of older systems exist that do not ensure compliance with the Act. To comply with the Act's regulation of commercial email, services typically require users to authenticate their return address and include a valid physical address, provide a one-click unsubscribe feature, and prohibit importing lists of purchased addresses that may not have given valid permission.

In addition to satisfying legal requirements, email service providers (ESPs) began to help customers establish and manage their own email marketing campaigns. The service providers supply email templates and general best practices, as well as methods for handling subscriptions and cancellations automatically. Some ESPs will provide insight/assistance with deliverability issues for major email providers. They also provide statistics pertaining to the number of messages received and opened, and whether the recipients clicked on any links within the messages.

The CAN-SPAM Act was updated with some new regulations including a no fee provision for opting out, further definition of "sender", post office or private mail boxes count as a "valid physical postal address" and definition of "person". These new provisions went into effect on July 7, 2008.^[14]

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Google Affiliate Network

Google Affiliate Network

Type	Public
Industry	Affiliate marketing
Founded	Chicago, Illinois (1998) as Dynamic Trade
Headquarters	Mountain View, California
Products	Affiliate network
Website	google.com/ads/affiliatenetwork/ ^[1]

The **Google Affiliate Network** is the affiliate marketing company, specifically affiliate network, formerly known as Doubleclick Performics, which was bought by Google in 2007. [1]

Brief history

- DoubleClick announced the acquisition of DoubleClick (including Performics) by Google for \$3.1 Billion in April 2007. The acquisition was finalized in March 2008 after the approval of the Department of Justice antitrust authorities in the United States and the Brussels-based European Commission, the antitrust authority of the European Union. ^{[2][3]}
- The controversial ^[4] search engine marketing and optimization part of Performics was acquired by Publicis in 2008, after the purchase of DoubleClick by Google (NASDAQ: GOOG) had been finalized. ^[5] The affiliate network part of *DoubleClick Performics* remained with Google and was re-branded *Google Affiliate Network*.

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Company Website

- Google Affiliate Network Website (<http://www.google.com/ads/affiliatenetwork/>)
- Google AdPlanner (beta) (<http://www.google.com/adplanner/>) - Complimentary tool
- Google Homepage (<http://www.google.com/>) (corporate website)

Landing page optimization

Landing page optimization (LPO) is one part of a broader Internet marketing process called conversion optimization, or Conversion Rate Optimization (CRO), with the goal of improving the percentage of visitors to the website that become sales leads and customers. A landing page is a webpage that is displayed when a potential customer clicks an advertisement or a search engine result link. This webpage typically displays content that is a relevant extension of the advertisement or link. LPO aims to provide page content and appearance that makes the webpage more appealing to target audiences.

Bases for landing page optimization

There are three major types of LPO based on targeting^[1]:

1. **Associative content targeting** (also called *rule-based optimization* or *passive targeting*). The page content is modified based on information obtained about the visitor's search criteria, geographic information of source traffic, or other known generic parameters that can be used for explicit non-research-based consumer segmentation.
2. **Predictive content targeting** (also called *active targeting*). The page content is adjusted by correlating any known information about the visitor (e.g., prior purchase behavior, personal demographic information, browsing patterns, etc.) to anticipate (desired) future actions based on predictive analytics.
3. **Consumer directed targeting** (also called *social targeting*). The page content is created using the relevance of publicly available information through a mechanism based on reviews, ratings, tagging, referrals, etc.

There are two major types of LPO based on experimentation:

1. **Closed-ended experimentation**. Consumers are exposed to several variations of landing pages while their behavior is observed. At the conclusion of the experiment, an optimal page is selected based on the outcome of the experiment.
2. **Open-ended experimentation**. This approach is similar to closed-ended experimentation, except that the experimentation is ongoing, meaning that the landing page is adjusted dynamically as the experiment results change.

Experimentation-based landing page optimization

Experimentation-based LPO can be achieved using A/B testing, multivariate LPO, and total-experience testing. These methodologies are applicable to both closed- and open-ended experimentation.

A/B testing

A/B testing, or *A/B split testing*, is a method for testing two versions of a webpage: version "A" and version "B". The goal is to test multiple versions of webpages (e.g., home page, product page, FAQ) to determine which version is most appealing/effective. This testing method may also be known as *A/B/n split testing*; the *n* denoting more than 2 tests being measured and compared. The data for A/B testing is usually measured via click-through or conversion.^[2]

Testing can be conducted sequentially or in parallel. In sequential testing, often the easiest to implement, the various versions of the webpages are made available online for a specified time period. In parallel (split) testing, both versions are made available, and the traffic is divided between the two. It is not recommended that sequential split testing be performed, as the results can dramatically be skewed by differing time periods and traffic patterns in which the different tests are run.

A/B testing has the following advantages:

- Inexpensive because existing resources and tools are used.

- Simple because no complex statistical analysis is required.

A/B testing has the following disadvantages:

- Difficult to control all external factors (e.g., campaigns, search traffic, press releases, seasonality) when using sequential testing.
- Very limited in that reliable conclusions cannot be drawn for pages that contain multiple elements that vary in each version.

Multivariate landing page optimization

Multivariate landing page optimization (MVLPO) accounts for multiple variations of visual elements (e.g., graphics, text) on a page. For example, a given page may have k choices for the title, m choices for the featured image or graphic, and n choices for the company logo. This example yields $k \times m \times n$ landing page configurations.

Significant improvements can be seen through testing different copy text, form layouts, landing page images and background colours. However, not all elements produce the same improvements in conversions, and by looking at the results from different tests, it is possible to identify the elements that consistently tend to produce the greatest increase in conversions.

The first application of an experimental design for MVLPO was performed by Moskowitz Jacobs Inc. in 1998 as a simulation/demonstration project for LEGO. MVLPO did not become a mainstream approach until 2003 or 2004.

MVLPO has the following advantages:

- Provides a reliable, scientifically based approach for understanding customers' preferences and optimizing their experience.
- Has evolved to be an easy-to-use approach in which not much IT involvement is required. In many cases, a few lines of JavaScript allow remote vendor servers to control changes, collect data, and analyze the results.
- Provides a foundation for open-ended experimentation.

MVLPO has the following disadvantages:

- As with any quantitative consumer research, there is a danger of GIGO (garbage in, garbage out). Ideas that are sourced from known customer touchpoints or strategic business objectives are needed to obtain optimal results.
- Focuses on optimizing one page at a time. Website experiences for most sites involve multiple pages, which are typically complex. For an e-commerce website, it is typical for a successful purchase to involve between twelve and eighteen pages; for a support site, even more pages are often required.

Total-experience testing

Total-experience testing, or *experience testing*, is a new and evolving type of experiment-based testing in which the entire website experience of the visitor is examined using technical capabilities of the website platform (e.g., ATG, Blue Martini Software, etc.).^[3] Rather than creating multiple websites, total-experience testing uses the website platform to create several persistent experiences, and monitors which one is preferred by the customers.

An advantage of total-experience testing is that it reflects the customer's total website experience, not just the experience with a single page. Two disadvantages are that total-experience testing requires a website platform that supports experience testing, and it takes longer to obtain results than A/B testing and MVLPO.

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Microsoft adCenter

Microsoft adCenter (formerly **MSN adCenter**), is the division of the Microsoft Network (MSN) responsible for MSN's advertising services. Microsoft adCenter provides pay per click advertisements. This is a service aimed at people who want to advertise a product. Microsoft also has a (still in beta) service for webmasters who want to monetize on their site: Microsoft pubCenter.

History

Microsoft was the last of the "Big Three" search engines (Microsoft, Google and Yahoo!) to develop its own system for delivering pay per click (PPC) ads. Until the beginning of 2006, all of the ads displayed on the Bing (formerly MSN Search) search engine were supplied by Overture (and later Yahoo!). MSN collected a portion of the ad revenue in return for displaying Yahoo!'s ads on its search engine.^[1]

As search marketing grew, Microsoft began developing its own system, Microsoft adCenter, for selling PPC advertisements directly to advertisers. As the system was phased in, MSN search showed Yahoo! and Microsoft adCenter advertising in its search results. Microsoft effort to create AdCenter was led by Tarek Najm, then general manager in MSN division of Microsoft. In June 2006, the contract between Yahoo! and Microsoft had expired and Microsoft was displaying only ads from adCenter until 2010. In January 2010 Microsoft announced a take over of Yahoo! and the combination of Bing, formerly MSN Search, to form the Microsoft Search Alliance. A complete transition of all Yahoo! sponsored ad clients to Microsoft adCenter occurred in October 2010.

In November 2006 Microsoft Acquired DeepMetrix, a company situated in Gatineau, Canada, that created web-analytics software. Microsoft has built new product AdCenter Analytics based on the acquired technology. In October, 2007 the Beta version of Microsoft Project Gatineau was released to a limited number of participants.^{[2][3]}

In May 2007, Microsoft agreed to purchase the digital marketing solutions parent company, aQuantive, for roughly \$6 billion.^[4]

Microsoft acquired ScreenTonic on May 3, 2007,^[5] AdECN on July 26, 2007,^[6] and YaData on February 27, 2008 and merged their technologies into adCenter.^[7]

On February 23, 2009, Publisher Leadership Council was created under the umbrella of Microsoft Advertising. The council was responsible to deliver the next-generation advertising platform for the publishers of digital media resulting in the formation of Microsoft pubCenter.^[8]

Technology

Similar to Google AdWords, Microsoft adCenter uses both the maximum amount an advertiser is willing to pay per click (PPC) on their ad and the advertisement's click-through rate (CTR) to determine how frequently an advertisement is shown. This system encourages advertisers to write effective ads and to advertise only on searches which are relevant to their advertisement.

Microsoft adCenter allows advertisers to target their ads by restricting their ads to a given set of demographics and by increasing their bids whenever the ad is seen by a user of a certain demographic. As of November 2006, no other PPC advertising system has a similar feature. Similarly, adCenter allows advertisers to run their ads on specific days of the week or certain times of day.

Microsoft adCenter provides both UI and Web service API front end to advertisers, both are built on Microsoft .Net 2.0 framework. A Windows-only desktop application allows users to manage Microsoft adCenter campaigns offline, or to make bulk changes easily, as well as offering performance alerts and keyword research features.

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External links

- Microsoft adCenter (<http://adcenter.microsoft.com>)
- adCenter Community (<http://www.adcentercommunity.com>)
 - Official adCenter Advertiser Blog (<http://adcentercommunity.com/blogs/advertiser>)
 - Official adCenter Analytics Blog (<http://adcentercommunity.com/blogs/analytics>)
 - Official adCenter API Developer Blog (<http://adcentercommunity.com/blogs/api>)
 - Official adCenter Support Forums (<http://adcentercommunity.com/forums/>)
- Microsoft Advertising Intelligence (<http://advertising.microsoft.com/learning-center/downloads/microsoft-advertising-intelligence>) (a keyword research and optimization tool, formerly Add-in for Excel Version 1.0)

Mobile advertising

Mobile advertising is a form of advertising via mobile (wireless) phones or other mobile devices. It is a subset of mobile marketing.

Overview

Some see mobile advertising as closely related to online or internet advertising, though its reach is far greater - currently, most mobile advertising is targeted at mobile phones, that came estimably to a global total of 4.6 billion as of 2009. Notably computers, including desktops and laptops, are currently estimated at 1.1 billion globally.

It is probable that advertisers and media industry will increasingly take account of a bigger and fast-growing mobile market, though it remains at around 1% of global advertising spent. Mobile media is evolving rapidly and while mobile phones will continue to be the mainstay, it is not clear whether mobile phones based on cellular backhaul or smartphones based on WiFi hot spot or WiMAX hot zone will also strengthen. However, such is the emergence of this form of advertising, that there is now a dedicated global awards ceremony organised every year by Visiongain.

As mobile phones outnumber TV sets by over 3 to 1, and PC based internet users by over 4 to 1, and the total laptop and desktop PC population by nearly 5 to 1, advertisers in many markets have recently rushed to this media. In Spain 75% of mobile phone owners receive ads, in France 62% and in Japan 54%. More remarkably as mobile advertising matures, like in the most advanced markets, the user involvement also matures. In Japan today, already 44% of mobile phone owners click on ads they receive on their phones. Mobile advertising was worth 900 million dollars in Japan alone. According to the research firm Berg Insight the global mobile advertising market that was estimated to € 1 billion in 2008. Furthermore, Berg Insight forecasts the global mobile advertising market to grow at a compound annual growth rate of 43 percent to € 8.7 billion in 2014^[1].

Types of mobile ads

In some markets, this type of advertising is most commonly seen as a Mobile Web Banner (top of page) or Mobile Web Poster (bottom of page banner), while in others, it is dominated by SMS advertising (which has been estimated at over 90% of mobile marketing revenue worldwide). Other forms include MMS advertising, advertising within mobile games and mobile videos, during mobile TV receipt, full-screen interstitials, which appear while a requested item of mobile content or mobile web page is loading up, and audio advertisements that can take the form of a jingle before a voicemail recording, or an audio recording played while interacting with a telephone-based service such as movie ticketing or directory assistance.

The Mobile Marketing Association and the IAB (Interactive Advertising Bureau) has published mobile advertising guidelines,^{[2] [3]} but it is difficult to keep such guidelines current in such a fast-developing area.

The effectiveness of a mobile media ad campaign can be measured in a variety of ways. The main measurements are impressions (views) and click-through rates. They are also sold to advertisers by views (Cost Per Impression) or by click-through (Cost Per Click). Additional measurements include conversion rates, such as click-to-call rates and other degrees of interactive measurement.

Mobile media can run on a mobile web page or within a mobile application, often referred to as in-App.^[4]

Mobile Rich Media

In addition to standard mobile display banners, a growing trend is to include rich media execution within the banner ads. This includes banners that would expand to a larger size, offering advertisers a larger display to communicate their message. Games within the banner to make the experience more interactive or a video within the banner space.

There are limitations rich media on mobile because all of the coding must be done in HTML5, since the iOS does not support flash.

Handsets display and corresponding ad images

There are hundreds of handsets in the market and they differ by screen size and supported technologies (e.g. MMS, WAP 2.0). For color images, formats such as PNG, JPEG, GIF and BMP are typically supported, along with the monochrome WBMP format. The following gives an overview of various handset screen sizes and a recommended image size for each type.^[5]

Handset	Approx Handset Screen Size (px W x H)	Example Handsets	Ad Unit	Ad Size (pixels)
X-Large	320 x 320	Palm Treo 700P, Nokia E70	X-Large	300 x 50
Large	240 x 320	Samsung MM-A900, LG VX-8500 Chocolate, Sony Ericsson W910i	Large	216 x 36
Medium	176 x 208	Motorola RAZR, LG VX-8000, Motorola ROKR E1	Medium	168 x 28
Small	128 x 160	Motorola V195	Small	120 x 20

Source: Mobile Marketing Association^[6]

History

Martin Cooper invented a portable handset in 1973, when he was a project manager at Motorola. It was almost three decades after the idea of cellular communications was introduced by Bell Laboratories. Two decades later, cellular phones made a commercial debut in the mass market in the early 1990s. In the early days of cellular handsets, phone functionality was limited to dialing, and voice input/output.

When the second generation of mobile telecoms (so-called 2G) was introduced in Finland by Radiolinja (now Elisa) on the GSM standard (now the world's most common mobile technology with over 2 billion users) in 1991, the digital technology introduced data services. SMS text messaging was the first such service. The first person-to-person SMS text message was sent in Finland in December 1994. SMS (Short Message Service) gradually began to grow, becoming the largest data service by number of users in the world, currently with 74% of all mobile subscribers or 2.4 billion people active users of SMS in 2007.

One advantage of SMS is that while even in conference, users are able to send and receive brief messages unobtrusively, while enjoying privacy. Even in such environments as in a restaurant, café, bank, travel agency office, and so on, the users can enjoy some privacy by sending/receiving brief text messages in an unobtrusive way.

It would take six years from the launch of SMS until the first case of advertising would appear on this new data media channel, when a Finnish news provider offered free news headlines via SMS, sponsored by advertising. This led to rapid experimentation in mobile advertising and mobile marketing, and the world's first conference to discuss mobile advertising was held in London in 2000, sponsored by the Wireless Marketing Association (which later merged into the Mobile Marketing Association). The first books to discuss mobile advertising were Ahonen's M-Profits and Haig's Mobile Marketing in 2002. Several major mobile operators around the world launched their own mobile advertising arms, like Aircross in South Korea, owned by the parents of SK Telecoms the biggest mobile operator, or like D2 Communications in Japan, the joint venture of Japan's largest mobile operator NTT

DoCoMo and Dentsu, Japan's largest ad agency.

Mobile as media

This unobtrusive two-way communications caught the attention of media industry and advertisers as well as cellphone makers and telecom operators. Eventually, SMS became a new media - called the "seventh mass media channel" by several media and mobile experts - and even more, it is a two-way mobile media, as opposed to one-way immobile media like radios, newspapers and TV. Besides, the immediacy of responsiveness in this two-way media is a new territory found for media industry and advertisers, who are eager to measure up market response immediately. Additionally, the possibility of fast delivery of the messages and the ubiquity of the technology (it does not require any additional functionality from the mobile phone, all devices available today are capable of receiving SMS), make it ideal for time- and location-sensitive advertising, such as customer loyalty offers (ex. shopping centres, large brand stores), SMS promotions of events, etc. To leverage this strength of SMS advertising, timely and reliable delivery of messages is paramount, which is guaranteed by some SMS gateway providers.

Mobile media has begun to draw more significant attention from media giants and advertising industry since the mid-2000s, based on a view that mobile media was to change the way advertisements were made, and that mobile devices can form a new media sector. Despite this, revenues are still a small fraction of the advertising industry as a whole but are most certainly on the rise. Informa reported that mobile advertising in 2007 was worth \$2.2 billion. This is less than 0.5% of the approximately \$450 billion global advertising industry.

Types of mobile advertising are expected to change rapidly. In other words, mobile technology will come up with a strong push for identifying newer and unheard-of mobile multimedia, with the result that subsequent media migration will greatly stimulate a consumer behavioral shift and establish a paradigm shift in mobile advertising. A major media migration is on, as desktop Internet evolves into mobile Internet. One typical case in point is Nielsen's recent buyout of Telephia.

However it should be kept in mind that the rapid change in the technology used by mobile advertisers can also have adverse effect to the number of consumers being reached by the mobile advertisements, due to technical limitations of their mobile devices. Because of that, campaigns that aim to achieve wide response or are targeting lower income groups might be better off relying on older, more widespread mobile advertising technologies, such as SMS.

Viral marketing

As mobile is an interactive mass media similar to the internet, advertisers are eager to utilize and make use of it [viral marketing] methods, by which one recipient of an advertisement on mobile, will forward that to a friend. This allows users to become part of the advertising experience. At the bare minimum mobile ads with viral abilities can become powerful interactive campaigns. At the extreme, they can become engagement marketing experiences. A key element of mobile marketing campaigns is the most influential member of any target audience or community, which is called the alpha user

Privacy concern

Advocates have raised the issue of privacy. Targeted mobile marketing requires customization of ad content to reach interested and relevant customers. To customize such behavioral personal data, user profiling, data mining and other behavior watch tools are employed, and privacy advocates warn that this may cause privacy infringement.^[7]

Some mobile carriers offer freebie or cheaper rate plans in exchange for SMS or other mobile ads. However, mobile TV and mobile search may override this privacy concern, as soon as they are implemented on a full-blown basis. In a naive way to override privacy concern, however, User's prior consent needs to be obtained through membership to join or User account to set up. Both mobile TV and mobile search may supersede the way of getting Users' prior consent through membership or User account because users are free to choose mobile TV channels or mobile search

services on a voluntary basis.

Interactivity

Mobile devices aim to outgrow the domain of voice-intensive cellphones and to enter a new world of multimedia mobile devices, like laptops, PDA phones and smartphones. Unlike the conventional one-way media like TV, radio and newspaper, web media has enabled two-way traffic, thereby introducing a new phase of interactive advertising, regardless of whether static or mobile. This user-centric approach was noted at the 96th annual conference of Association of National Advertisers in 2006, which described "a need to replace decades worth of top-down marketing tactics with bottom-up, grass-roots approaches". Many use 2d bar codes to make offline print material more interactive with their mobile device. This has been proven to be successful in Japan, UK, Philippines and has been catching on in Northern America.

Mobile device issues

Coincidentally, however, mobile devices are encountering technological bottlenecks in terms of battery life, formats, and safety issue

In a broad sense, mobile devices are categorically broken down into portable and stationary equipment. Technically, mobile devices are categorized as below:

- Handheld [portable]
- Laptop, including ultraportable [portable]
- Dashtop, including GPS navigation, satellite radio, and WiMAX-enabled dashtop mobile payment platforms[fixed on dashboards]

The battery life and safety issues will perhaps combine to eventually push mobile equipment's inroads into vehicle dashtops. However, satellite-based GPS navigation and satellite radio may already hit a snag because of their part-time usage and technological hierarchy. Put differently, people want more functions than GPS navigation and satellite radios. The trend indicates an ongoing convergence into all-in-one dashtop mobile devices incorporating GPS navigators, satellite radios, MP3 players, mobile TV, mobile Internet, MVDER (vehicle black box), driving safety monitors, smartphones and even video games.

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External links

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- "Letting Consumers Control Marketing: Priceless" (<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/10/09/business/media/09adcol.html?ex=1183348800&en=93c51f8d013d75f7&ei=5070>)
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- Mobile Advertising Blogs (<http://mobzio.com>), Mobzio (<http://mobzio.com>)
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Multivariate landing page optimization

Multivariate landing page optimization (MVLPO) is a specific form of landing page optimization where multiple variations of visual elements (e.g., graphics, text) on a webpage are evaluated. For example, a given page may have k choices for the title, m choices for the featured image or graphic, and n choices for the company logo. This example yields $k \times m \times n$ landing page configurations.

The first application of an experimental design for MVLPO was performed by Moskowitz Jacobs Inc. in 1998 as a simulation/demonstration project for LEGO. MVLPO did not become a mainstream approach until 2003 or 2004.

Multivariate landing page optimization can be executed in a live (production) environment, or through simulations and market research surveys.

Overview

Multivariate landing page optimization is based on experimental design (e.g., discrete choice, conjoint analysis, Taguchi methods, IDDEA, etc.), which tests a structured combination of webpage elements. Some vendors (e.g., Memetrics.com) use a "full factorial" approach, which tests all possible combinations of elements. This approach requires a smaller sample size—typically, many thousands—than traditional fractional Taguchi designs to achieve statistical significance. This quality is one reason that choice modeling won the Nobel Prize in 2000. Fractional designs typically used in simulation environments require the testing of small subsets of possible combinations, and have a higher margin of error. Some critics of the approach question the possible interactions between the elements of the webpages, and the inability of most fractional designs to address this issue.

To resolve the limitations of fractional designs, an advanced simulation method based on the Rule Developing Experimentation (RDE) paradigm was introduced.^[1] RDE creates individual models for each respondent, discovers any and all synergies and suppressions among the elements^[2], uncovers attitudinal segmentation, and allows for databasing across tests and over time.^[3]

Live environment execution

In live environment MVLPO execution, a special tool makes dynamic changes to a page so that visitors are directed to different executions of landing pages created according to an experimental design. The system keeps track of the visitors and their behavior—including their conversion rate, time spent on the page, etc. Once sufficient data has accumulated, the system estimates the impact of individual components on the target measurement (e.g., conversion rate).

Live environment execution has the following advantages:

- Capable of testing the effect of variations as a real-life experience
 - Generally transparent to visitors
 - Relatively simple and inexpensive to execute
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Live environment execution has the following disadvantages:

- High cost
- Increased complexity involved in modifying a production-level website
- Long period of time required to achieve statistically-reliable data. This situation is due to variations in the amount of traffic that generates the data necessary for a decision.
- Likely inappropriate for low-traffic, high-importance websites when the site administrators do not want to lose any potential customers

Simulation (survey) execution

In simulation (survey) MVLPO execution, the foundation consists of advanced market research techniques. In the research phase, the respondents are directed to a survey that presents them with a set of experimentally-designed combinations of a landing page. The respondents rate each version based on some factor (e.g., purchase intent). At the end of the research phase, regression analysis models are created either for individual pages or for the entire panel of pages. The outcome relates the presence or absence of page elements on the different landing page executions to the respondents' ratings. These results can be used to synthesize new landing pages as combinations of the top-scoring elements optimized for subgroups or market segments, with or without interactions^[4].

Simulation execution has the following advantages:

- Faster and easier to prepare and execute in many cases, as compared to live environment execution
- Applicable to low-traffic websites
- Capable of producing more robust and rich data because of increased control over the page design

Simulation execution has the following disadvantages:

- Possible bias because of a simulated environment rather than a live environment.
- Necessity to recruit and optionally incentivize the respondents

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Online presence management

Online presence management is a process that engineers and stimulates a certain brand online. It can be done by It combines the elements of web design and development, blogging, search engine optimization, pay per click marketing, reputation management, directory listings, social media, link sharing, and other avenues to create a long-term positive presence for an organization in various search engines.^{[1][2]}

Due to the evolving nature of Internet use, a web site alone is not enough for a brand anymore. They need to be active in the many services on the Internet such as Google Maps, Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, Youtube, as well as ensuring they are represented in the data of mobile apps, and other online databases.^[3]

The online presence management process starts by keeping in mind the business goals for the activity. These goals help to define the online presence management strategy. Once this strategy is put in place, an ongoing and constant process of evaluating and fine-tuning begins that drives online presence towards the business goals, while constantly pushing to reduce the cost of achieving those goals by relying more on the organic activity of the Internet rather than the paid placement approaches. These goals will define the online presence management strategy. Online presence management strategy works for any size business, whether it is a small business or a major corporation.

Consumers simply search on various web based search engines or mobile apps to find information about a certain product or service. When they perform a query in hope of finding information on an organization or a brand, the organization/brand would want to make sure that information about their brand and online properties are listed high in the search results. In order to manage online brand presence, the organization needs to know what is being said and discussed about their brand. As part of a total online presence management strategy, in addition to the monitoring of a brand, another key component is to analyze online presence throughout the Internet.

Services provided under online presence management

Web Designing and Development

This primarily includes web design, web content development, client liaison, client-side/server-side scripting, and web server and network security configuration.

Blogging

A blog is a website in which items are posted on a regular basis and displayed in reverse chronological order. A blog is like an online journal that is updated daily. The term blog is a shortened form of weblog or web log. Authoring a blog, maintaining a blog, or adding an article to an existing blog is called "blogging". Individual articles on a blog are called "blog posts", "posts", or "entries". A person who posts these entries is called a "blogger". A blog may be composed of text, hypertext, images, and links. Blogs often use a conversational style of documentation.^[4]

Most blogs are primarily textual, although some focus on art, photographs, videos, or audio.

Microblogging is another type of blogging, featuring very short posts. The whole blogging process tremendously helps in promoting the online presence of any service or product.

Search Engine Optimization

Search Engine Optimization is modifying a website to increase its ranking and thus visibility in the organic or natural ("unpaid"), crawler-based listings of search engines. Search engines use a spider or a crawler to gather the listings by automatically "crawling" the web. The spider follows links to web pages, makes copies of the pages, and stores them in the search engine's index. Based on this data, the search engines then index the pages and rank the websites accordingly. Major search engines that index pages using spiders are Google, Yahoo, Bing, Aol, and lycos.^[5]

Some of the methods to optimize a web page in search engines are:

1. Domain name strategies
2. Linking strategies
3. Keywords used
4. Title tags
5. Meta description tags
6. Alt tags

Internet Advertising

Internet advertising is a form of broadcasting and promotion of products, ideas, or services using the Internet to attract customers. A recent advertising industry survey reveals that Internet advertising will generate about \$428 billion in revenues this year, whereas last year it was about \$220 billion. According to the same survey, 21 percent of Internet users consider online advertising to be the most relevant advertising system. Internet advertising has now overtaken other traditional advertising media such as newspapers, magazines, and radio.^[6] The three most common techniques of internet advertising are:

1. Cost per mille
2. Cost per click
3. Cost per action

Reputation Management

Reputation management is the process of tracking people's actions and opinions, looking for positive and negative opinions about any particular service or product, and removing negative opinions (if any) and converting them into positive ones. The main process of reputation management is reporting on those actions and opinions and reacting to that report, creating a feedback loop. Once a positive opinion about any entity is established online, its online presence too gets established.

The most important task of a reputation manager is to defend clients against damaging information on the web. With potential customers increasingly heading online to research products and services, bad reviews or complaints that turn up in a search can mean lost business. Thus reputation management services work on highlighting the positive pages and burying offending sites deep in search results.^[7]

Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing is a medium that provides social media tools and platforms to create and foster communities and relationships.^[8] Social media marketing programs usually center on efforts to create content that attracts attention and encourages readers to share content with their social networks. A corporate message spreads from user to user and presumably resonates because it is coming from a trusted, third-party source, as opposed to the brand or company itself. Social media is all about networking in a way that advocates trust among the parties and communities involved. Any website that allows users to share their content, opinions, and views and encourages interaction and community building can be classified as social media. Some popular social media sites are: Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Digg, MySpace, Scribd, Flickr, etc.

Understanding what tools are available and how to use them effectively is key to success in social media marketing. Some of these tools are:^[9]

1. Social media monitoring
 2. Social aggregation
 3. Social bookmarking and tagging
 4. Social analytics and reporting
 5. Automation
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6. Social media
7. Blog marketing
8. Validation

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Pay per click

Pay per click (PPC) (also called **Cost per click**) is an Internet advertising model used to direct traffic to websites, where advertisers pay the publisher (typically a website owner) when the ad is clicked. With search engines, advertisers typically bid on keyword phrases relevant to their target market. Content sites commonly charge a fixed price per click rather than use a bidding system. PPC "display" advertisements are shown on web sites or search engine results with related content that have agreed to show ads. This approach differs from the "pay per impression" methods used in television and newspaper advertising.

In contrast to the generalized portal, which seeks to drive a high volume of traffic to one site, PPC implements the so-called affiliate model, that provides purchase opportunities wherever people may be surfing. It does this by offering financial incentives (in the form of a percentage of revenue) to affiliated partner sites. The affiliates provide purchase-point click-through to the merchant. It is a pay-for-performance model: If an affiliate does not generate sales, it represents no cost to the merchant. Variations include banner exchange, pay-per-click, and revenue sharing programs.

Websites that utilize PPC ads will display an advertisement when a keyword query matches an advertiser's keyword list, or when a content site displays relevant content. Such advertisements are called *sponsored links* or *sponsored ads*, and appear adjacent to or above organic results on search engine results pages, or anywhere a web developer chooses on a content site.^[1]

Among PPC providers, Google AdWords, Yahoo! Search Marketing, and Microsoft adCenter are the three largest network operators, and all three operate under a bid-based model.^[1]

The PPC advertising model is open to abuse through click fraud, although Google and others have implemented automated systems^[2] to guard against abusive clicks by competitors or corrupt web developers.^[3]

Determining cost per click

There are two primary models for determining cost per click: flat-rate and bid-based. In both cases the advertiser must consider the potential value of a click from a given source. This value is based on the type of individual the advertiser is expecting to receive as a visitor to his or her website, and what the advertiser can gain from that visit, usually revenue, both in the short term as well as in the long term. As with other forms of advertising targeting is key, and factors that often play into PPC campaigns include the target's interest (often defined by a search term they have entered into a search engine, or the content of a page that they are browsing), intent (e.g., to purchase or not),

location (for geo targeting), and the day and time that they are browsing.

Flat-rate PPC

In the flat-rate model, the advertiser and publisher agree upon a fixed amount that will be paid for each click. In many cases the publisher has a rate card that lists the Cost Per Click (CPC) within different areas of their website or network. These various amounts are often related to the content on pages, with content that generally attracts more valuable visitors having a higher CPC than content that attracts less valuable visitors. However, in many cases advertisers can negotiate lower rates, especially when committing to a long-term or high-value contract.

The flat-rate model is particularly common to comparison shopping engines, which typically publish rate cards.^[4] However, these rates are sometimes minimal, and advertisers can pay more for greater visibility. These sites are usually neatly compartmentalized into product or service categories, allowing a high degree of targeting by advertisers. In many cases, the entire core content of these sites is paid ads.

Bid-based PPC

In the bid-based model, the advertiser signs a contract that allows them to compete against other advertisers in a private auction hosted by a publisher or, more commonly, an advertising network. Each advertiser informs the host of the maximum amount that he or she is willing to pay for a given ad spot (often based on a keyword), usually using online tools to do so. The auction plays out in an automated fashion every time a visitor triggers the ad spot.

When the ad spot is part of a search engine results page (SERP), the automated auction takes place whenever a search for the keyword that is being bid upon occurs. All bids for the keyword that target the searcher's geo-location, the day and time of the search, etc. are then compared and the winner determined. In situations where there are multiple ad spots, a common occurrence on SERPs, there can be multiple winners whose positions on the page are influenced by the amount each has bid. The ad with the highest bid generally shows up first, though additional factors such as ad quality and relevance can sometimes come into play (see Quality Score).

In addition to ad spots on SERPs, the major advertising networks allow for contextual ads to be placed on the properties of 3rd-parties with whom they have partnered. These publishers sign up to host ads on behalf of the network. In return, they receive a portion of the ad revenue that the network generates, which can be anywhere from 50% to over 80% of the gross revenue paid by advertisers. These properties are often referred to as a *content network* and the ads on them as *contextual ads* because the ad spots are associated with keywords based on the context of the page on which they are found. In general, ads on content networks have a much lower click-through rate (CTR) and conversion rate (CR) than ads found on SERPs and consequently are less highly valued. Content network properties can include websites, newsletters, and e-mails.^[5]

Advertisers pay for each click they receive, with the actual amount paid based on the amount bid. It is common practice amongst auction hosts to charge a winning bidder just slightly more (e.g. one penny) than the next highest bidder or the actual amount bid, whichever is lower.^[6] This avoids situations where bidders are constantly adjusting their bids by very small amounts to see if they can still win the auction while paying just a little bit less per click.

To maximize success and achieve scale, automated bid management systems can be deployed. These systems can be used directly by the advertiser, though they are more commonly used by advertising agencies that offer PPC bid management as a service. These tools generally allow for bid management at scale, with thousands or even millions of PPC bids controlled by a highly automated system. The system generally sets each bid based on the goal that has been set for it, such as maximize profit, maximize traffic at breakeven, and so forth. The system is usually tied into the advertiser's website and fed the results of each click, which then allows it to set bids. The effectiveness of these systems is directly related to the quality and quantity of the performance data that they have to work with - low-traffic ads can lead to a scarcity of data problem that renders many bid management tools useless at worst, or inefficient at best.

History

In February 1998 Jeffrey Brewer of Goto.com, a 25-employee startup company (later Overture, now part of Yahoo!), presented a pay per click search engine proof-of-concept to the TED conference in California.^[7] This presentation and the events that followed created the PPC advertising system. Credit for the concept of the PPC model is generally given to Idealab and Goto.com founder, Bill Gross.

Google started search engine advertising in December 1999. It was not until October 2000 that the AdWords system was introduced, allowing advertisers to create text ads for placement on the Google search engine. However, PPC was only introduced in 2002; until then, advertisements were charged at cost-per-thousand impressions. Overture has filed a patent infringement lawsuit against Google, saying the rival search service overstepped its bounds with its ad-placement tools.^[8]

Although GoTo.com started PPC in 1998, Yahoo! did not start syndicating GoTo.com (later Overture) advertisers until November 2001.^[9] Prior to this, Yahoo's primary source of SERPS advertising included contextual IAB advertising units (mainly 468x60 display ads). When the syndication contract with Yahoo! was up for renewal in July 2003, Yahoo! announced intent to acquire Overture for \$1.63 billion.^[10]

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External links

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Permission marketing

Permission marketing is a term popularized by Seth Godin^[1] (but found earlier^[2]) used in marketing in general and e-marketing specifically. The undesirable opposite of permission marketing is interruption marketing. Marketers obtain permission before advancing to the next step in the purchasing process. For example, they ask permission to send email newsletters to prospective customers.^[3] It is mostly used by online marketers, notably email marketers and search marketers, as well as certain direct marketers who send a catalog in response to a request.

This form of marketing requires that the prospective customer has either given explicit permission for the marketer to send their promotional message (like an email or catalog request) or implicit permission (like querying a search engine). This can be either via an online email opt-in form or by using search engines, which implies a request for information which can include that of a commercial nature. To illustrate, consider someone who searches for "buy shoes." Online shoe stores have searchers' permission to make an offer that solves their shoe problem.

Marketers feel that this is a more efficient use of their resources because the offers are sent to people only if actually interested in the product. This is one technique used by marketers that have a personal marketing orientation. Marketers feel that marketing should be done on a one-to-one basis rather than using broad aggregated concepts like market segment or target market.

In the United Kingdom, an opt-in is required for email marketing, under The Privacy and Electronic Communications (EC Directive) Regulations 2003 since 11 December 2003.

Permission marketing and the internet

Permission marketing offers the promise of improving targeting by helping consumers interface with marketers most likely to provide relevant promotional messages. Many permission-marketing firms (like yes mail.com, now part of the business incubator CMGI) claim that customer response rates are in the region of 5-20%, and since most use e-mail, they are not affected by the measurement problems of banner advertising. Since the ads arrive in the mailbox of the individual, it is likely that more attention would be paid to them in comparison to banners.

Even though permission marketing can be implemented in any direct medium, it has emerged as a serious idea only with the advent of the Internet. The two reasons for this are that on the Internet, the cost of marketer-to-consumer communication is low, and the Internet enabled rapid feedback mechanisms due to instantaneous two-way communication.

Another motivation for permission marketing on the Web has been the failure of the direct mail approach of sending unsolicited promotional messages. The prime example of this is unsolicited commercial e-mail or "Spam". Senders of spam realize three things: the cost of obtaining a new e-mail address is minimal, the marginal cost of contacting an additional customer is nearly zero and it is easy to deceive the consumer.

Spammers can easily obtain new e-mail addresses from websites and Usenet groups using software programs that "trawl" the Internet. Individuals provide their addresses at these places for other purposes and hence, this violates their privacy rights. In addition, marketers incur similar costs if they send out 1 million or 10 million e-mails. Moreover, there are now programs that enable the large-scale use of deceptive practices (like forged e-mail headers).

Because of those problems, spam cannot be a legitimate form of marketing communication. Using it would lead to an excessive message volume for consumers, weakening of brand reputation and a slowing of the entire network. Hence, permission marketing is seen as a feasible alternative for Internet marketing communication.

Permission marketing is now a large-scale activity on the Internet. A leading Internet business periodical noted that "permission marketing was once a niche business. Now, everybody is doing it." In addition, permission marketing has been incorporated in leading texts on marketing management like a millennium edition.

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- [3] Scott, David Meerman (2007). *The new rules of marketing and PR how to use news releases, blogs, podcasts, viral marketing and online media to reach your buyers directly*. Hoboken, N.J.: J. Wiley & Sons, Inc.. p. 162. ISBN 978-0-470-11345-5. "...if you're asking for someone's e-mail address ... you must provide something equally valuable in return."

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Search engine optimization

Search engine optimization (SEO) is the process of improving the visibility of a website or a web page in search engines via the "natural" or un-paid ("organic" or "algorithmic") search results. In general, the earlier (or higher ranked on the search results page), and more frequently a site appears in the search results list, the more visitors it will receive from the search engine's users. SEO may target different kinds of search, including image search, local search, video search, academic search,^[1] news search and industry-specific vertical search engines.

As an Internet marketing strategy, SEO considers how search engines work, what people search for, the actual search terms or keywords typed into search engines and which search engines are preferred by their targeted audience. Optimizing a website may involve editing its content and HTML and associated coding to both increase its relevance to specific keywords and to remove barriers to the indexing activities of search engines. Promoting a site to increase the number of backlinks, or inbound links, is another SEO tactic.

The acronym "SEOs" can refer to "search engine optimizers," a term adopted by an industry of consultants who carry out optimization projects on behalf of clients, and by employees who perform SEO services in-house. Search engine optimizers may offer SEO as a stand-alone service or as a part of a broader marketing campaign. Because effective SEO may require changes to the HTML source code of a site and site content, SEO tactics may be incorporated into website development and design. The term "search engine friendly" may be used to describe website designs, menus, content management systems, images, videos, shopping carts, and other elements that have been optimized for the purpose of search engine exposure.

History

Webmasters and content providers began optimizing sites for search engines in the mid-1990s, as the first search engines were cataloging the early Web. Initially, all webmasters needed to do was submit the address of a page, or URL, to the various engines which would send a "spider" to "crawl" that page, extract links to other pages from it, and return information found on the page to be indexed.^[2] The process involves a search engine spider downloading a page and storing it on the search engine's own server, where a second program, known as an indexer, extracts various information about the page, such as the words it contains and where these are located, as well as any weight for specific words, and all links the page contains, which are then placed into a scheduler for crawling at a later date.

Site owners started to recognize the value of having their sites highly ranked and visible in search engine results, creating an opportunity for both white hat and black hat SEO practitioners. According to industry analyst Danny

Sullivan, the phrase "search engine optimization" probably came into use in 1997.^[3] The first documented use of the term Search Engine Optimization was John Audette and his company Multimedia Marketing Group as documented by a web page from the MMG site from August, 1997.^[4]

Early versions of search algorithms relied on webmaster-provided information such as the keyword meta tag, or index files in engines like ALIWEB. Meta tags provide a guide to each page's content. Using meta data to index pages was found to be less than reliable, however, because the webmaster's choice of keywords in the meta tag could potentially be an inaccurate representation of the site's actual content. Inaccurate, incomplete, and inconsistent data in meta tags could and did cause pages to rank for irrelevant searches.^[5] Web content providers also manipulated a number of attributes within the HTML source of a page in an attempt to rank well in search engines.^[6]

By relying so much on factors such as keyword density which were exclusively within a webmaster's control, early search engines suffered from abuse and ranking manipulation. To provide better results to their users, search engines had to adapt to ensure their results pages showed the most relevant search results, rather than unrelated pages stuffed with numerous keywords by unscrupulous webmasters. Since the success and popularity of a search engine is determined by its ability to produce the most relevant results to any given search, allowing those results to be false would turn users to find other search sources. Search engines responded by developing more complex ranking algorithms, taking into account additional factors that were more difficult for webmasters to manipulate.

Graduate students at Stanford University, Larry Page and Sergey Brin, developed "Backrub," a search engine that relied on a mathematical algorithm to rate the prominence of web pages. The number calculated by the algorithm, PageRank, is a function of the quantity and strength of inbound links.^[7] PageRank estimates the likelihood that a given page will be reached by a web user who randomly surfs the web, and follows links from one page to another. In effect, this means that some links are stronger than others, as a higher PageRank page is more likely to be reached by the random surfer.

Page and Brin founded Google in 1998. Google attracted a loyal following among the growing number of Internet users, who liked its simple design.^[8] Off-page factors (such as PageRank and hyperlink analysis) were considered as well as on-page factors (such as keyword frequency, meta tags, headings, links and site structure) to enable Google to avoid the kind of manipulation seen in search engines that only considered on-page factors for their rankings. Although PageRank was more difficult to game, webmasters had already developed link building tools and schemes to influence the Inktomi search engine, and these methods proved similarly applicable to gaming PageRank. Many sites focused on exchanging, buying, and selling links, often on a massive scale. Some of these schemes, or link farms, involved the creation of thousands of sites for the sole purpose of link spamming.^[9]

By 2004, search engines had incorporated a wide range of undisclosed factors in their ranking algorithms to reduce the impact of link manipulation. Google says it ranks sites using more than 200 different signals.^[10] The leading search engines, Google, Bing, and Yahoo, do not disclose the algorithms they use to rank pages. SEO service providers, such as Rand Fishkin, Barry Schwartz, Aaron Wall and Jill Whalen, have studied different approaches to search engine optimization, and have published their opinions in online forums and blogs.^{[11][12]} SEO practitioners may also study patents held by various search engines to gain insight into the algorithms.^[13]

In 2005, Google began personalizing search results for each user. Depending on their history of previous searches, Google crafted results for logged in users.^[14] In 2008, Bruce Clay said that "ranking is dead" because of personalized search. It would become meaningless to discuss how a website ranked, because its rank would potentially be different for each user and each search.^[15]

In 2007, Google announced a campaign against paid links that transfer PageRank.^[16] On June 15, 2009, Google disclosed that they had taken measures to mitigate the effects of PageRank sculpting by use of the nofollow attribute on links. Matt Cutts, a well-known software engineer at Google, announced that Google Bot would no longer treat nofollowed links in the same way, in order to prevent SEO service providers from using nofollow for PageRank sculpting.^[17] As a result of this change the usage of nofollow leads to evaporation of pagerank. In order to avoid the above, SEO engineers developed alternative techniques that replace nofollowed tags with obfuscated Javascript and

thus permit PageRank sculpting. Additionally several solutions have been suggested that include the usage of iframes, Flash and Javascript.^[18]

In December 2009, Google announced it would be using the web search history of all its users in order to populate search results.^[19]

Google Instant, real-time-search, was introduced in late 2009 in an attempt to make search results more timely and relevant. Historically site administrators have spent months or even years optimizing a website to increase search rankings. With the growth in popularity of social media sites and blogs the leading engines made changes to their algorithms to allow fresh content to rank quickly within the search results.^[20]

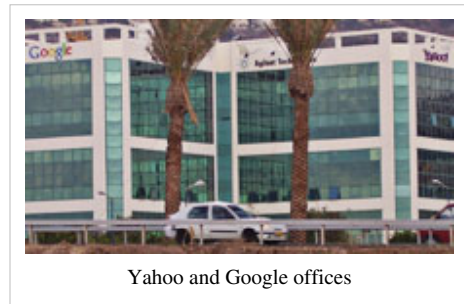
Relationship with search engines

By 1997, search engines recognized that webmasters were making efforts to rank well in their search engines, and that some webmasters were even manipulating their rankings in search results by stuffing pages with excessive or irrelevant keywords. Early search engines, such as Altavista and Infoseek, adjusted their algorithms in an effort to prevent webmasters from manipulating rankings.^[21]

Due to the high marketing value of targeted search results, there is potential for an adversarial relationship between search engines and SEO service providers. In 2005, an annual conference, AIRWeb, Adversarial Information Retrieval on the Web,^[22] was created to discuss and minimize the damaging effects of aggressive web content providers.

Companies that employ overly aggressive techniques can get their client websites banned from the search results. In 2005, the Wall Street Journal reported on a company, Traffic Power, which allegedly used high-risk techniques and failed to disclose those risks to its clients.^[23] Wired magazine reported that the same company sued blogger and SEO Aaron Wall for writing about the ban.^[24] Google's Matt Cutts later confirmed that Google did in fact ban Traffic Power and some of its clients.^[25]

Some search engines have also reached out to the SEO industry, and are frequent sponsors and guests at SEO conferences, chats, and seminars. Major search engines provide information and guidelines to help with site optimization.^{[26][27]} Google has a Sitemaps program^[28] to help webmasters learn if Google is having any problems indexing their website and also provides data on Google traffic to the website. Bing Toolbox provides a way from webmasters to submit a sitemap and web feeds, allowing users to determine the crawl rate, and how many pages have been indexed by their search engine.



Yahoo and Google offices

Methods

Getting indexed

The leading search engines, such as Google, Bing and Yahoo!, use crawlers to find pages for their algorithmic search results. Pages that are linked from other search engine indexed pages do not need to be submitted because they are found automatically. Some search engines, notably Yahoo!, operate a paid submission service that guarantee crawling for either a set fee or cost per click.^[29] Such programs usually guarantee inclusion in the database, but do not guarantee specific ranking within the search results.^[30] Two major directories, the Yahoo Directory and the Open Directory Project both require manual submission and human editorial review.^[31] Google offers Google Webmaster Tools, for which an XML Sitemap feed can be created and submitted for free to ensure that all pages are found, especially pages that aren't discoverable by automatically following links.^[32]

Search engine crawlers may look at a number of different factors when crawling a site. Not every page is indexed by the search engines. Distance of pages from the root directory of a site may also be a factor in whether or not pages

get crawled.^[33] Additionally, search engines sometimes have problems with crawling sites with certain kinds of graphic content, flash files, portable document format files, and dynamic content.^[34]

Preventing crawling

To avoid undesirable content in the search indexes, webmasters can instruct spiders not to crawl certain files or directories through the standard robots.txt file in the root directory of the domain. Additionally, a page can be explicitly excluded from a search engine's database by using a meta tag specific to robots. When a search engine visits a site, the robots.txt located in the root directory is the first file crawled. The robots.txt file is then parsed, and will instruct the robot as to which pages are not to be crawled. As a search engine crawler may keep a cached copy of this file, it may on occasion crawl pages a webmaster does not wish crawled. Pages typically prevented from being crawled include login specific pages such as shopping carts and user-specific content such as search results from internal searches. In March 2007, Google warned webmasters that they should prevent indexing of internal search results because those pages are considered search spam.^[35]

Increasing prominence

A variety of methods can increase the prominence of a webpage within the search results. Cross linking between pages of the same website to provide more links to most important pages may improve its visibility.^[36] Writing content that includes frequently searched keyword phrase, so as to be relevant to a wide variety of search queries will tend to increase traffic.^[36] Updating content so as to keep search engines crawling back frequently can give additional weight to a site. Adding relevant keywords to a web page's meta data, including the title tag and meta description, will tend to improve the relevancy of a site's search listings, thus increasing traffic. URL normalization of web pages accessible via multiple urls, using the "canonical" meta tag^[37] or via 301 redirects can help make sure links to different versions of the url all count towards the page's link popularity score.

Image search optimization

Image search optimization is the process of organizing the content of a webpage to increase relevance to a specific keyword on image search engines. Like search engine optimization, the aim is to achieve a higher organic search listing and thus increasing the volume of traffic from search engines.

Image search optimization techniques can be viewed as a subset of search engine optimization techniques that focuses on gaining high ranks on image search engine results.

Unlike normal SEO process, there isn't much to do for ISO. Making high quality images accessible to search engines and providing some description about images is almost all that can be done for ISO.

White hat versus black hat

SEO techniques can be classified into two broad categories: techniques that search engines recommend as part of good design, and those techniques of which search engines do not approve. The search engines attempt to minimize the effect of the latter, among them spamdexing. Industry commentators have classified these methods, and the practitioners who employ them, as either white hat SEO, or black hat SEO.^[38] White hats tend to produce results that last a long time, whereas black hats anticipate that their sites may eventually be banned either temporarily or permanently once the search engines discover what they are doing.^[39]

An SEO technique is considered white hat if it conforms to the search engines' guidelines and involves no deception. As the search engine guidelines^{[26][27][40]} are not written as a series of rules or commandments, this is an important distinction to note. White hat SEO is not just about following guidelines, but is about ensuring that the content a search engine indexes and subsequently ranks is the same content a user will see. White hat advice is generally summed up as creating content for users, not for search engines, and then making that content easily accessible to the

spiders, rather than attempting to trick the algorithm from its intended purpose. White hat SEO is in many ways similar to web development that promotes accessibility,^[41] although the two are not identical.

Black hat SEO attempts to improve rankings in ways that are disapproved of by the search engines, or involve deception. One black hat technique uses text that is hidden, either as text colored similar to the background, in an invisible div, or positioned off screen. Another method gives a different page depending on whether the page is being requested by a human visitor or a search engine, a technique known as cloaking.

Search engines may penalize sites they discover using black hat methods, either by reducing their rankings or eliminating their listings from their databases altogether. Such penalties can be applied either automatically by the search engines' algorithms, or by a manual site review. One infamous example was the February 2006 Google removal of both BMW Germany and Ricoh Germany for use of deceptive practices.^[42] Both companies, however, quickly apologized, fixed the offending pages, and were restored to Google's list.^[43]

As a marketing strategy

SEO is not an appropriate strategy for every website, and other Internet marketing strategies can be more effective, depending on the site operator's goals.^[44] A successful Internet marketing campaign may also depend upon building high quality web pages to engage and persuade, setting up analytics programs to enable site owners to measure results, and improving a site's conversion rate.^[45]

SEO may generate an adequate return on investment. However, search engines are not paid for organic search traffic, their algorithms change, and there are no guarantees of continued referrals. Due to this lack of guarantees and certainty, a business that relies heavily on search engine traffic can suffer major losses if the search engines stop sending visitors.^[46] Search engines can change their algorithms, impacting a website's placement, possibly resulting in a serious loss of traffic. According to Google's CEO, Erick Schmidt, in 2010, Google made over 500 algorithm changes - almost 1.5 per day.^[47] It is considered wise business practice for website operators to liberate themselves from dependence on search engine traffic.^[48] Seomoz.org has suggested that "search marketers, in a twist of irony, receive a very small share of their traffic from search engines." Instead, their main sources of traffic are links from other websites.^[49]

International markets

Optimization techniques are highly tuned to the dominant search engines in the target market. The search engines' market shares vary from market to market, as does competition. In 2003, Danny Sullivan stated that Google represented about 75% of all searches.^[50] In markets outside the United States, Google's share is often larger, and Google remains the dominant search engine worldwide as of 2007.^[51] As of 2006, Google had an 85-90% market share in Germany.^[52] While there were hundreds of SEO firms in the US at that time, there were only about five in Germany.^[52] As of June 2008, the marketshare of Google in the UK was close to 90% according to Hitwise.^[53] That market share is achieved in a number of countries.

As of 2009, there are only a few large markets where Google is not the leading search engine. In most cases, when Google is not leading in a given market, it is lagging behind a local player. The most notable markets where this is the case are China, Japan, South Korea, Russia and the Czech Republic where respectively Baidu, Yahoo! Japan, Naver, Yandex and Seznam are market leaders.

Successful search optimization for international markets may require professional translation of web pages, registration of a domain name with a top level domain in the target market, and web hosting that provides a local IP address. Otherwise, the fundamental elements of search optimization are essentially the same, regardless of language.^[52]

Legal precedents

On October 17, 2002, SearchKing filed suit in the United States District Court, Western District of Oklahoma, against the search engine Google. SearchKing's claim was that Google's tactics to prevent spamdexing constituted a tortious interference with contractual relations. On May 27, 2003, the court granted Google's motion to dismiss the complaint because SearchKing "failed to state a claim upon which relief may be granted."^{[54][55]}

In March 2006, KinderStart filed a lawsuit against Google over search engine rankings. Kinderstart's website was removed from Google's index prior to the lawsuit and the amount of traffic to the site dropped by 70%. On March 16, 2007 the United States District Court for the Northern District of California (San Jose Division) dismissed KinderStart's complaint without leave to amend, and partially granted Google's motion for Rule 11 sanctions against KinderStart's attorney, requiring him to pay part of Google's legal expenses.^{[56][57]}

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Social media optimization

Social media optimization (also known as SMO or social SEO) is the methodization of social media activity with the intent of attracting unique visitors to website content. SMO is one of many online methods of website optimization. One of the many other methods is search engine optimization or SEO.

There are two types of social media optimization methods:

1. Social media features added to the content itself, including: RSS feeds, social news and sharing buttons, user rating and polling tools, and incorporating third-party community functionalities like images and videos
2. Promotional activities in social media aside from the content being promoted, including: blogging, commenting on other blogs, participating in discussion groups, and posting status updates on social networking profiles

Social media optimization is related to search engine marketing, but differs in several ways, primarily the focus on driving traffic from sources other than search engines, though improved search ranking is also a benefit of successful SMO.

Social media optimization is in many ways connected as a technique to viral marketing where word of mouth is created not through friends or family but through the use of networking in social bookmarking, video and photo sharing websites. In a similar way the engagement with blogs achieves the same by sharing content through the use of RSS in the blogosphere and special blog search engines.

Social media optimization is considered an integral part of an online reputation management (ORM) or Search Engine Reputation Management (SERM) strategy for organizations or individuals who care about their online presence.

Social media optimization is not limited to marketing and brand building. Increasingly, smart businesses are integrating social media participation as part of their knowledge management strategy (i.e., product/service development, recruiting, employee engagement and turnover, brand building, customer satisfaction and relations, business development and more). Additionally, social media optimization can be implemented to foster a community of the associated site, allowing for a healthy business-to-consumer (B2C) relationship.

Origins

According to search engine expert Danny Sullivan^[1], the term "social media optimization" was first used and described by Rohit Bhargava. Bhargava's original five rules for conducting social media optimization were:^[2]

1. Increase your linkability
2. Make tagging and bookmarking easy
3. Reward inbound links
4. Help your content travel
5. Encourage the mashup
6. Get communities connected

Several authors added new rules to the original post. Today there are 16 rules, which were translated into French, Dutch, Italian, Spanish, German, Japanese, Greek, Portuguese, Russian, Hebrew and recently also in Thai.

Four years after the initial post, Rohit Bhargava posted an updated set of five new rules.^[3]

1. Create shareable content
2. Make sharing easy
3. Reward engagement
4. Proactively share content
5. Encourage the mashup

Around the same time, entrepreneur and blogger Ben Elowitz proposed SMO as a broader set of online marketing strategies for all published websites in an era where social platforms are ubiquitous.^[4]

Social media gaming

Social media gaming is online gaming activity performed through social media sites with friends and online gaming activity that promotes social media interaction.^[5] Examples of the former include FarmVille, FrontierVille, and Mafia Wars. In these games a player's social network is exploited to recruit additional players and allies.^{[6][7][8]} An example of the latter is Empire Avenue, a virtual stock exchange where players buy and sell shares of each other's social network worth. In Empire Avenue a player's worth is linked to their social media influence and activity as well as that of the other players they have invested virtual currency in. This game design promotes social media interaction as a means to attaining higher value in Empire Avenue market rankings.^{[9][10][11]}

Nielsen Media Research estimates that, as of June 2010, social networks and online games account for about 1/3 of all online activity by Americans.^[12]

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Web analytics

Web analytics is the measurement, collection, analysis and reporting of internet data for purposes of understanding and optimizing web usage.^[1]

Web analytics is not just a tool for measuring website traffic but can be used as a tool for business research and market research, as well as a means to determine and improve upon the effectiveness of a web site. Web analytics applications can also help companies measure the results of traditional print advertising campaigns. It helps one to estimate how traffic to a website changes after the launch of a new advertising campaign. Web analytics provides information about the number of visitors to a website and the number of page views. It helps gauge traffic and popularity trends which is useful for market research.

There are two categories of web analytics; *off-site* and *on-site* web analytics.

Off-site web analytics refers to web measurement and analysis regardless of whether you own or maintain a website. It includes the measurement of a website's *potential* audience (opportunity), share of voice (visibility), and buzz (comments) that is happening on the Internet as a whole.

On-site web analytics measure a visitor's journey once *on your website*. This includes its drivers and conversions; for example, which landing pages encourage people to make a purchase. On-site web analytics measures the performance of your website in a commercial context. This data is typically compared against key performance indicators for performance, and used to improve a web site or marketing campaign's audience response.

Historically, web analytics has referred to on-site visitor measurement. However in recent years this has blurred, mainly because vendors are producing tools that span both categories.

On-site web analytics technologies

Many different vendors provide on-site web analytics software and services. There are two main technological approaches to collecting the data. The first method, *log file analysis*, reads the logfiles in which the web server records all its transactions. The second method, *page tagging*, uses JavaScript or images on each page to notify a third-party server when a page is rendered by a web browser. Both collect data that can be processed to produce web traffic reports.

In addition other data sources may also be added to augment the data. For example; e-mail response rates, direct mail campaign data, sales and lead information, user performance data such as click heat mapping, or other custom metrics as needed.

Web server logfile analysis

Web servers record some of their transactions in a logfile. It was soon realized that these logfiles could be read by a program to provide data on the popularity of the website. Thus arose web log analysis software.

In the early 1990s, web site statistics consisted primarily of counting the number of client requests (or *hits*) made to the web server. This was a reasonable method initially, since each web site often consisted of a single HTML file. However, with the introduction of images in HTML, and web sites that spanned multiple HTML files, this count became less useful. The first true commercial Log Analyzer was released by IPRO in 1994.^[2]

Two units of measure were introduced in the mid 1990s to gauge more accurately the amount of human activity on web servers. These were *page views* and *visits* (or *sessions*). A *page view* was defined as a request made to the web server for a page, as opposed to a graphic, while a *visit* was defined as a sequence of requests from a uniquely identified client that expired after a certain amount of inactivity, usually 30 minutes. The page views and visits are still commonly displayed metrics, but are now considered rather rudimentary.

The emergence of search engine spiders and robots in the late 1990s, along with web proxies and dynamically assigned IP addresses for large companies and ISPs, made it more difficult to identify unique human visitors to a website. Log analyzers responded by tracking visits by cookies, and by ignoring requests from known spiders.

The extensive use of web caches also presented a problem for logfile analysis. If a person revisits a page, the second request will often be retrieved from the browser's cache, and so no request will be received by the web server. This means that the person's path through the site is lost. Caching can be defeated by configuring the web server, but this can result in degraded performance for the visitor and bigger load on the servers.

Page tagging

Concerns about the accuracy of logfile analysis in the presence of caching, and the desire to be able to perform web analytics as an outsourced service, led to the second data collection method, page tagging or 'Web bugs'.

In the mid 1990s, Web counters were commonly seen — these were images included in a web page that showed the number of times the image had been requested, which was an estimate of the number of visits to that page. In the late 1990s this concept evolved to include a small invisible image instead of a visible one, and, by using JavaScript, to pass along with the image request certain information about the page and the visitor. This information can then be processed remotely by a web analytics company, and extensive statistics generated.

The web analytics service also manages the process of assigning a cookie to the user, which can uniquely identify them during their visit and in subsequent visits. Cookie acceptance rates vary significantly between web sites and may affect the quality of data collected and reported.

Collecting web site data using a third-party data collection server (or even an in-house data collection server) requires an additional DNS look-up by the user's computer to determine the IP address of the collection server. On occasion, delays in completing a successful or failed DNS look-ups may result in data not being collected.

With the increasing popularity of Ajax-based solutions, an alternative to the use of an invisible image, is to implement a call back to the server from the rendered page. In this case, when the page is rendered on the web browser, a piece of Ajax code would call back to the server and pass information about the client that can then be aggregated by a web analytics company. This is in some ways flawed by browser restrictions on the servers which can be contacted with XMLHttpRequest objects. Also, this method can lead to slightly lower reported traffic levels, since the visitor may stop the page from loading in mid-response before the Ajax call is made.

Logfile analysis vs page tagging

Both logfile analysis programs and page tagging solutions are readily available to companies that wish to perform web analytics. In some cases, the same web analytics company will offer both approaches. The question then arises of which method a company should choose. There are advantages and disadvantages to each approach.^[3]

Advantages of logfile analysis

The main advantages of logfile analysis over page tagging are as follows:

- The web server normally already produces logfiles, so the raw data is already available. No changes to the website are required.
- The data is on the company's own servers, and is in a standard, rather than a proprietary, format. This makes it easy for a company to switch programs later, use several different programs, and analyze historical data with a new program.
- Logfiles contain information on visits from search engine spiders, which generally do not execute JavaScript on a page and are therefore not recorded by page tagging. Although these should not be reported as part of the human activity, it is useful information for search engine optimization.
- Logfiles require no additional DNS Lookups. Thus there are no external server calls which can slow page load speeds, or result in uncounted page views.
- The web server reliably records every transaction it makes, including e.g. serving PDF documents and content generated by scripts, and does not rely on the visitors' browsers co-operating

Advantages of page tagging

The main advantages of page tagging over logfile analysis are as follows:

- Counting is activated by opening the page (given that the web client runs the tag scripts), not requesting it from the server. If a page is cached, it will not be counted by the server. Cached pages can account for up to one-third of all pageviews. Not counting cached pages seriously skews many site metrics. It is for this reason server-based log analysis is not considered suitable for analysis of human activity on websites.
 - Data is gathered via a component ("tag") in the page, usually written in JavaScript, though Java can be used, and increasingly Flash is used. JQuery and AJAX can also be used in conjunction with a server-side scripting language (such as PHP) to manipulate and (usually) store it in a database, basically enabling complete control over how the data is represented.
 - The script may have access to additional information on the web client or on the user, not sent in the query, such as visitors' screen sizes and the price of the goods they purchased.
 - Page tagging can report on events which do not involve a request to the web server, such as interactions within Flash movies, partial form completion, mouse events such as onClick, onMouseOver, onFocus, onBlur etc.
 - The page tagging service manages the process of assigning cookies to visitors; with logfile analysis, the server has to be configured to do this.
 - Page tagging is available to companies who do not have access to their own web servers.
 - Lately page tagging has become a standard in web analytics.^[4]
-

Economic factors

Logfile analysis is almost always performed in-house. Page tagging can be performed in-house, but it is more often provided as a third-party service. The economic difference between these two models can also be a consideration for a company deciding which to purchase.

- Logfile analysis typically involves a one-off software purchase; however, some vendors are introducing maximum annual page views with additional costs to process additional information. In addition to commercial offerings, several open-source logfile analysis tools are available free of charge.
- For Logfile analysis you have to store and archive your own data, which often grows very large quickly. Although the cost of hardware to do this is minimal, the overhead for an IT department can be considerable.
- For Logfile analysis you need to maintain the software, including updates and security patches.
- Complex page tagging vendors charge a monthly fee based on volume i.e. number of pageviews per month collected.

Which solution is cheaper to implement depends on the amount of technical expertise within the company, the vendor chosen, the amount of activity seen on the web sites, the depth and type of information sought, and the number of distinct web sites needing statistics.

Regardless of the vendor solution or data collection method employed, the cost of web visitor analysis and interpretation should also be included. That is, the cost of turning raw data into actionable information. This can be from the use of third party consultants, the hiring of an experienced web analyst, or the training of a suitable in-house person. A cost-benefit analysis can then be performed. For example, what revenue increase or cost savings can be gained by analysing the web visitor data?

Hybrid methods

Some companies are now producing programs that collect data through both logfiles and page tagging. By using a hybrid method, they aim to produce more accurate statistics than either method on its own. The first Hybrid solution was produced in 1998 by Rufus Evison, who then spun the product out to create a company based upon the increased accuracy of hybrid methods.

Geolocation of visitors

With IP geolocation, it is possible to track visitors location. Using IP geolocation database or API, visitors can be geolocated to city, region or country level.^[5]

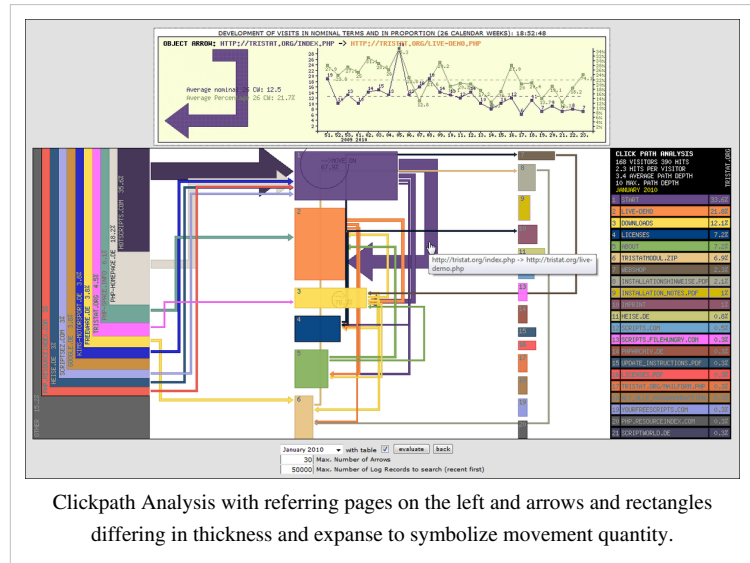
IP Intelligence, or Internet Protocol (IP) Intelligence, is a technology that maps the Internet and catalogues IP addresses by parameters such as geographic location (country, region, state, city and postcode), connection type, Internet Service Provider (ISP), proxy information, and more. The first generation of IP Intelligence was referred to as geotargeting or geolocation technology. This information is used by businesses for online audience segmentation in applications such online advertising, behavioral targeting, content localization (or website localization), digital rights management, personalization, online fraud detection, geographic rights management, localized search, enhanced analytics, global traffic management, and content distribution.

Click analytics

Click analytics is a special type of web analytics that gives special attention to clicks.

Commonly, click analytics focuses on on-site analytics. An editor of a web site uses click analytics to determine the performance of his or her particular site, with regards to where the users of the site are clicking.

Also, click analytics may happen real-time or "unreal"-time, depending on the type of information sought. Typically, front-page editors on high-traffic news media sites will want to monitor their pages in real-time, to optimize the content. Editors, designers or other types of stakeholders may analyze clicks on a wider time frame to aid them assess performance of writers, design elements or advertisements etc.



Data about clicks may be gathered in at least two ways. Ideally, a click is "logged" when it occurs, and this method requires some functionality that picks up relevant information when the event occurs. Alternatively, one may institute the assumption that a page view is a result of a click, and therefore log a simulated click that lead to that page view.

Customer lifecycle analytics

Customer lifecycle analytics is a visitor-centric approach to measuring that falls under the umbrella of lifecycle marketing. Page views, clicks and other events (such as API calls, access to third-party services, etc.) are all tied to an individual visitor instead of being stored as separate data points. Customer lifecycle analytics attempts to connect all the data points into a marketing funnel that can offer insights into visitor behavior and website optimization.

Other methods

Other methods of data collection are sometimes used. Packet sniffing collects data by sniffing the network traffic passing between the web server and the outside world. Packet sniffing involves no changes to the web pages or web servers. Integrating web analytics into the web server software itself is also possible.^[6] Both these methods claim to provide better real-time data than other methods.

Key definitions

There are no globally agreed definitions within web analytics as the industry bodies have been trying to agree definitions that are useful and definitive for some time. The main bodies who have had input in this area have been JICWEBS (The Joint Industry Committee for Web Standards in the UK and Ireland)^[7], ABCe (Audit Bureau of Circulations electronic, UK and Europe)^[8], The WAA (Web Analytics Association, US) and to a lesser extent the IAB (Interactive Advertising Bureau). This does not prevent the following list from being a useful guide, suffering only slightly from ambiguity. Both the WAA and the ABCe provide more definitive lists for those who are declaring their statistics using the metrics defined by either.

- **Hit** - A request for a file from the web server. Available only in log analysis. The number of hits received by a website is frequently cited to assert its popularity, but this number is extremely misleading and dramatically

over-estimates popularity. A single web-page typically consists of multiple (often dozens) of discrete files, each of which is counted as a hit as the page is downloaded, so the number of hits is really an arbitrary number more reflective of the complexity of individual pages on the website than the website's actual popularity. The total number of visitors or page views provides a more realistic and accurate assessment of popularity.

- **Page view** - A request for a file whose type is defined as a page in log analysis. An occurrence of the script being run in page tagging. In log analysis, a single page view may generate multiple hits as all the resources required to view the page (images, .js and .css files) are also requested from the web server.
- **Visit / Session** - A visit is defined as a series of page requests from the same uniquely identified client with a time of no more than 30 minutes between each page request. A session is defined as a series of page requests from the same uniquely identified client with a time of no more than 30 minutes and no requests for pages from other domains intervening between page requests. In other words, a session ends when someone goes to another site, or 30 minutes elapse between pageviews, whichever comes first. A visit ends only after a 30 minute time delay. If someone leaves a site, then returns within 30 minutes, this will count as one visit but two sessions. In practice, most systems ignore sessions and many analysts use both terms for visits. Because time between pageviews is critical to the definition of visits and sessions, a single page view does not constitute a visit or a session (it is a "bounce").
- **First Visit / First Session** - (also known as 'Absolute Unique Visitor') A visit from a visitor who has not made any previous visits.
- **Visitor / Unique Visitor / Unique User** - The uniquely identified client generating requests on the web server (log analysis) or viewing pages (page tagging) within a defined time period (i.e. day, week or month). A Unique Visitor counts once within the timescale. A visitor can make multiple visits. Identification is made to the visitor's computer, not the person, usually via cookie and/or IP+User Agent. Thus the same person visiting from two different computers or with two different browsers will count as two Unique Visitors. Increasingly visitors are uniquely identified by Flash LSO's (Local Shared Object), which are less susceptible to privacy enforcement.
- **Repeat Visitor** - A visitor that has made at least one previous visit. The period between the last and current visit is called visitor recency and is measured in days.
- **New Visitor** - A visitor that has not made any previous visits. This definition creates a certain amount of confusion (see common confusions below), and is sometimes substituted with analysis of first visits.
- **Impression** - An impression is each time an advertisement loads on a user's screen. Anytime you see a banner, that is an impression.
- **Singletons** - The number of visits where only a single page is viewed (a 'bounce'). While not a useful metric in and of itself the number of singletons is indicative of various forms of Click fraud as well as being used to calculate bounce rate and in some cases to identify automaton bots.
- **Bounce Rate** - The percentage of visits where the visitor enters and exits at the same page without visiting any other pages on the site in between.
- **% Exit** - The percentage of users who exit from a page.
- **Visibility time** - The time a single page (or a blog, Ad Banner...) is viewed.
- **Session Duration** - Average amount of time that visitors spend on the site each time they visit. This metric can be complicated by the fact that analytics programs can not measure the length of the final page view.^[9]
- **Page View Duration / Time on Page** - Average amount of time that visitors spend on each page of the site. As with Session Duration, this metric is complicated by the fact that analytics programs can not measure the length of the final page view unless they record a page close event, such as `onUnload()`.
- **Active Time / Engagement Time** - Average amount of time that visitors spend actually interacting with content on a web page, based on mouse moves, clicks, hovers and scrolls. Unlike Session Duration and Page View Duration / Time on Page, this metric **can** accurately measure the length of engagement in the final page view.
- **Page Depth / Page Views per Session** - Page Depth is the average number of page views a visitor consumes before ending their session. It is calculated by dividing total number of page views by total number of sessions

and is also called Page Views per Session or PV/Session.

- **Frequency / Session per Unique** - Frequency measures how often visitors come to a website. It is calculated by dividing the total number of sessions (or visits) by the total number of unique visitors. Sometimes it is used to measure the loyalty of your audience.
- **Click path** - the sequence of hyperlinks one or more website visitors follows on a given site.
- **Click** - "refers to a single instance of a user following a hyperlink from one page in a site to another".^[10] Some use click analytics to analyze their web sites.
- **Site Overlay** is a technique in which graphical statistics are shown besides each link on the web page. These statistics represent the percentage of clicks on each link.

Common sources of confusion in web analytics

The hotel problem

The hotel problem is generally the first problem encountered by a user of web analytics. The problem is that the unique visitors for each day in a month do not add up to the same total as the unique visitors for that month. This appears to an inexperienced user to be a problem in whatever analytics software they are using. In fact it is a simple property of the metric definitions.

The way to picture the situation is by imagining a hotel. The hotel has two rooms (Room A and Room B).

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Total
Room A	John	John	Jane	2 Unique Users
Room B	Mark	Jane	Mark	2 Unique Users
Total	2	2	2	?

As the table shows, the hotel has two unique users each day over three days. The sum of the totals with respect to the days is therefore six.

During the period each room has had two unique users. The sum of the totals with respect to the rooms is therefore four.

Actually only three visitors have been in the hotel over this period. The problem is that a person who stays in a room for two nights will get counted twice if you count them once on each day, but is only counted once if you are looking at the total for the period. Any software for web analytics will sum these correctly for whatever time period, thus leading to the problem when a user tries to compare the totals.

New visitors + Repeat visitors unequal to total visitors

Another common misconception in web analytics is that the sum of the new visitors and the repeat visitors ought to be the total number of visitors. Again this becomes clear if the visitors are viewed as individuals on a small scale, but still causes a large number of complaints that analytics software cannot be working because of a failure to understand the metrics.

Here the culprit is the metric of a new visitor. There is really no such thing as a new visitor when you are considering a web site from an ongoing perspective. If a visitor makes their first visit on a given day and then returns to the web site on the same day they are both a new visitor and a repeat visitor for that day. So if we look at them as an individual which are they? The answer has to be both, so the definition of the metric is at fault.

A new visitor is not an individual; it is a fact of the web measurement. For this reason it is easiest to conceptualize the same facet as a first visit (or first session). This resolves the conflict and so removes the confusion. Nobody expects the number of first visits to add to the number of repeat visitors to give the total number of visitors. The metric will have the same number as the new visitors, but it is clearer that it will not add in this fashion.

On the day in question there was a first visit made by our chosen individual. There was also a repeat visit made by the same individual. The number of first visits and the number of repeat visits will add up to the total number of visits for that day.

Web analytics methods

Problems with cookies

Historically, vendors of page-tagging analytics solutions have used third-party cookies sent from the vendor's domain instead of the domain of the website being browsed. Third-party cookies can handle visitors who cross multiple unrelated domains within the company's site, since the cookie is always handled by the vendor's servers.

However, third-party cookies in principle allow tracking an individual user across the sites of different companies, allowing the analytics vendor to collate the user's activity on sites where he provided personal information with his activity on other sites where he thought he was anonymous. Although web analytics companies deny doing this, other companies such as companies supplying banner ads have done so. Privacy concerns about cookies have therefore led a noticeable minority of users to block or delete third-party cookies. In 2005, some reports showed that about 28% of Internet users blocked third-party cookies and 22% deleted them at least once a month.^[11]

Most vendors of page tagging solutions have now moved to provide at least the option of using first-party cookies (cookies assigned from the client subdomain).

Another problem is cookie deletion. When web analytics depend on cookies to identify unique visitors, the statistics are dependent on a persistent cookie to hold a unique visitor ID. When users delete cookies, they usually delete both first- and third-party cookies. If this is done between interactions with the site, the user will appear as a first-time visitor at their next interaction point. Without a persistent and unique visitor id, conversions, click-stream analysis, and other metrics dependent on the activities of a unique visitor over time, cannot be accurate.

Cookies are used because IP addresses are not always unique to users and may be shared by large groups or proxies. In some cases, the IP address is combined with the user agent in order to more accurately identify a visitor if cookies are not available. However, this only partially solves the problem because often users behind a proxy server have the same user agent. Other methods of uniquely identifying a user are technically challenging and would limit the trackable audience or would be considered suspicious. Cookies are the selected option because they reach the lowest common denominator without using technologies regarded as spyware.

Secure analytics (metering) methods

All the methods described above (and some other methods not mentioned here, like sampling) have the central problem of being vulnerable to manipulation (both inflation and deflation). This means these methods are imprecise and insecure (in any reasonable model of security). This issue has been addressed in a number of papers^{[12] [13] [14] [15]} but to-date the solutions suggested in these papers remain theoretic, possibly due to lack of interest from the engineering community, or because of financial gain the current situation provides to the owners of big websites. For more details, consult the aforementioned papers.

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Web traffic

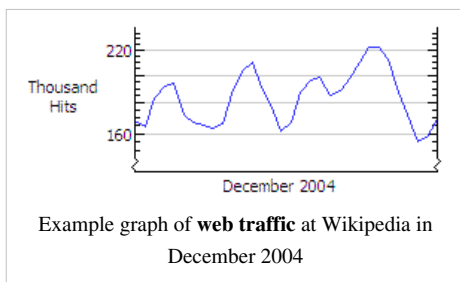
Web traffic is the amount of data sent and received by visitors to a web site. It is a large portion of Internet traffic. This is determined by the number of visitors and the number of pages they visit. Sites monitor the incoming and outgoing traffic to see which parts or pages of their site are popular and if there are any apparent trends, such as one specific page being viewed mostly by people in a particular country. There are many ways to monitor this traffic and the gathered data is used to help structure sites, highlight security problems or indicate a potential lack of bandwidth — not all web traffic is welcome.

Some companies offer advertising schemes that, in return for increased web traffic (visitors), pay for screen space on the site. Sites also often aim to increase their web traffic through inclusion on search engines and through search engine optimization.

Analyzing web traffic

Web analytics is the measurement of the behavior of visitors to a website. In a commercial context, it especially refers to the measurement of which aspects of the website work towards the business objectives of Internet marketing initiatives; for example, which landing pages encourage people to make a purchase. Notable vendors of web analytics software and services include Webtrends, Coremetrics, Omniture, and Google Analytics.

Measuring web traffic



Web traffic is measured to see the popularity of web sites and individual pages or sections within a site.

Web traffic can be analyzed by viewing the traffic statistics found in the web server log file, an automatically generated list of all the pages served. A *hit* is generated when any file is served. The page itself is considered a file, but images are also files, thus a page with 5 images could generate 6 hits (the 5 images and the page itself). A *page view* is generated when a visitor requests any page within the web site — a

visitor will always generate at least one page view (the main page) but could generate many more. Tracking applications external to the web site can record traffic by inserting a small piece of HTML code in every page of the web site.^[1]

Web traffic is also sometimes measured by packet sniffing and thus gaining random samples of traffic data from which to extrapolate information about web traffic as a whole across total Internet usage.

The following types of information are often collated when monitoring web traffic:

- The number of visitors.
- The average number of page views per visitor — a high number would indicate that the average visitors go deep inside the site, possibly because they like it or find it useful.
- Average visit duration — the total length of a user's visit. As a rule the more time they spend the more they're interested in your company and are more prone to contact.

- Average page duration – how long a page is viewed for. The more pages viewed, the better it is for your company.
- Domain classes – all levels of the IP Addressing information required to deliver Webpages and content.
- Busy times – the most popular viewing time of the site would show when would be the best time to do promotional campaigns and when would be the most ideal to perform maintenance
- Most requested pages – the most popular pages
- Most requested entry pages – the entry page is the first page viewed by a visitor and shows which are the pages most attracting visitors
- Most requested exit pages – the most requested exit pages could help find bad pages, broken links or the exit pages may have a popular external link
- Top paths – a path is the sequence of pages viewed by visitors from entry to exit, with the top paths identifying the way most customers go through the site
- Referrers; The host can track the (apparent) source of the links and determine which sites are generating the most traffic for a particular page.

Web sites like Alexa Internet produce traffic rankings and statistics based on those people who access the sites while using the Alexa toolbar. The difficulty with this is that it's not looking at the complete traffic picture for a site. Large sites usually hire the services of companies like Nielsen NetRatings, but their reports are available only by subscription.

Controlling web traffic

The amount of traffic seen by a web site is a measure of its popularity. By analysing the statistics of visitors it is possible to see shortcomings of the site and look to improve those areas. It is also possible to increase (or, in some cases decrease) the popularity of a site and the number of people that visit it.

Limiting access

It is sometimes important to protect some parts of a site by password, allowing only authorized people to visit particular sections or pages.

Some site administrators have chosen to block their page to specific traffic, such as by geographic location. The re-election campaign site for U.S. President George W. Bush (GeorgeWBush.com^[2]) was blocked to all internet users outside of the U.S. on 25 October 2004 after a reported attack on the site.^[3]

It is also possible to limit access to a web server both based on the number of connections and by the bandwidth expended by each connection. On Apache HTTP servers, this is accomplished by the *limitipconn* module and others.

Website Traffic from SEO

Website traffic can be obtained in several different ways. Most people are familiar with the the two major types, paid and non-paid or organic traffic. By ranking highly in the search engines for your desired keywords, you can continually bring visitors to your websites without additional marketing costs. In order to do so, you will have to organize your pages in such a way that they are both friendly to the search engine spiders, as well as provide a quality experience to your visitors.

By building your websites correctly from the very beginning, over time you will gain reputation inside of your niche. To do so, make sure that the following items within your website have been fully optimized. Meta page description(this is the description that people see in the search engines), Page Title(this is the main title that people see in the search engines), Keywords within your domain name such as www.YourKeywordsHere.com, and finally your H Tags or Header Tags(think of this as the title of a story in a magazine).

To optimize your site offline, you will need to add several types of links in order to gain link credibility. First is your web directory submission because this will allow the search engines to begin to spider you. Second are article directories as they will help you build a broad foundation across the internet. Third, are social bookmarks which ideally will come from people that have visited your website and are now deciding to post a permanent link to share your content and also to remind themselves where to find your content.

In addition to these items you will probably need to apply several other techniques in order to reach the top spot and stay there. One of the newer and more popular services being used for SEO purposes is the link wheel which gives you a once-removed linking strategy so as not to trigger any Google sandbox.

Increase web site traffic

Web traffic can be increased by placement of a site in search engines and purchase of advertising, including bulk e-mail, pop-up ads, and in-page advertisements. Web traffic can also be increased by purchasing non-internet based advertising.

If a web page is not listed in the first pages of any search, the odds of someone finding it diminishes greatly (especially if there is other competition on the first page). Very few people go past the first page, and the percentage that go to subsequent pages is substantially lower. Consequently, getting proper placement on search engines is as important as the web site itself.^[4]

Organic traffic

Web traffic which comes from unpaid listing at search engines or directories is commonly known as "organic" traffic. Organic traffic can be generated or increased by including the web site in directories, search engines, guides (such as yellow pages and restaurant guides), and award sites.

In most cases the best way to increase web traffic is to register it with the major search engines. Just registering does not guarantee traffic, as search engines work by "crawling" registered web sites. These crawling programs (crawlers) are also known as "spiders" or "robots". Crawlers start at the registered home page, and usually follow the hyperlinks it finds, to get to pages inside the web site (internal links). Crawlers start gathering information about those pages and storing it and indexing it in the search engine database. In every case, they index the page URL and the page title. In most cases they also index the web page header (meta tag) and a certain amount of the text of the page. Then, when a search engine user looks for a particular word or phrase, the search engine looks into the database and produces the results, usually sorted by relevance according to the search engine algorithms.

Usually, the top organic result gets most of the clicks from web users. According to some studies, the top result gets between 5% and 10% of the clicks. Each subsequent result gets between 30% and 60% of the clicks of the previous one. This indicates that it is important to appear in the top results. There are some companies which specialize in search engine marketing. However, it is becoming common for webmasters to get approached by "boiler-room" companies with no real knowledge of how to get results. As opposed to pay-per-click, search engine marketing is usually paid monthly or annually, and most search engine companies cannot promise specific results for what is paid to them.

Because of the huge amount of information available on the web, crawlers might take days, weeks or months to complete review and index all the pages they find. Google, for example, as of the end of 2004 had indexed over eight billion pages. Even having hundreds or thousands of servers working on the spidering of pages, a complete reindexing takes its time. That is why some pages recently updated in certain web sites are not immediately found when doing searches on search engines.

Traffic overload

Too much web traffic can dramatically slow down or even prevent all access to a web site. This is caused by more file requests going to the server than it can handle and may be an intentional attack on the site or simply caused by over-popularity. Large scale web sites with numerous servers can often cope with the traffic required and it is more likely that smaller services are affected by traffic overload. Sudden traffic load may also hang your server or may result in shutdown of your services.

Denial of service attacks

Denial-of-service attacks (DoS attacks) have forced web sites to close after a malicious attack, flooding the site with more requests than it could cope with. Viruses have also been used to co-ordinate large scale distributed denial-of-service attacks.

Sudden popularity

A sudden burst of publicity may accidentally cause a web traffic overload. A news item in the media, a quickly propagating email, or a link from a popular site may cause such a boost in visitors (sometimes called Slashdot effect)

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