This tutorial has been produced by The Australian Tourism Data Warehouse as part of the complete online education program, Tourism e-kit

Reading time: 10 minutes	Prerequisite: n/a

This tutorial will explain why measuring the success of your website is crucial and what key metrics you should focus on.

1) RISK WITHOUT MEASUREMENT IS SUICIDE

Do you know how much business your website is **really** generating? **If you cannot tell how much return on investment your website brings your business then this tutorial is for you.** By taking the time to understand what aspects of your website work and what aspects don't work you will be better equipped to attract visitors to your website and convert them into customers.

One of the many advantages of the Internet is that it is extremely well suited to measure and track. It does it automatically once you have installed an analytics program. It will be easy to find out if your website is delivering and what to do to increase its performance.

You will also be able to track your traditional marketing campaigns (such as an advertisement in a magazine) by using a call-to-action (an enticing phrase) directing readers to your website. You will then be able to track how many visitors followed the call-to-action thus measuring if the ad was successful or not.

2) GOOD WEBSITE STATISTIC PACKAGES

The number one website statistic package for small and medium businesses is called Google Analytics http://analytics.google.com. It is free and can be easily installed by a person who isn't web savvy in less than 30 minutes. If you don't have an analytics package yet, don't wait any longer. Install it today (the next tutorial will explain you how to do so).

The intelligence you will obtain from Google Analytics will allow you to take advantage of opportunities, identify and fix problems associated with your website and maximise the return on investment from your web strategy. Let's look at an example which diagnoses an issue in terms of traffic to a website.

The simple report below shows that the majority of visits to the website are not coming from search engines but from visiting the site directly. This means that most people (75% of people in this example) are coming to the website using the website's address (e.g. www.mytourbus.com). The website is actually preaching to the converted and not reaching people who have never heard about the product. For the majority of tourism operators, new business is crucial!

Screen capture copyright: Google

The example above is typical of small and medium tourism websites that have been set up and left running on the Internet, without any further development, maintenance or optimisation.

If you would like to view a video overview of what Google Analytics has to offer, follow this link: http://services.google.com/analytics/tour/index_en-US.html.

3) KEY METRICS TO MEASURE

Once you have installed a web analytics program on your site, you will generally have to wait 24 hours for your first results. Then you will be able to look at the data and devise a strategy to improve your results!

a)   Visits

Measuring the number of visits to your website is crucial. However, there are different types of visits. You should focus on the number of unique visitors instead of the number of visits.

Visits: A visit to your website is the number of times your website was viewed within a period of time. This measure is not very indicative as a single visitor can be counted many times.

For example, imagine that your competitor checks your website 10 times a day over 1 month.

That corresponds to 300 visits to your site over one month.

Pageviews: This is the same metric as above but instead of counting the number of visits to the website the program will count the number of pages that were viewed.

Average pageviews: This is a calculation that corresponds to the number of pageviews divided by the number of visits.

For example, if a website has 3.2 average pageviews it means that on average, per visit, the

visitor visited 3.2 pages

Unique visitors: This measure is the most important and significant one. The number of unique visitors to your site is the real number of individuals that visited your site within a period of time. Only the initial visit is counted.

If you have 450 unique visitors to your site a month it means that you have had 450 different

individuals (who really are in fact different computers) visiting your site. Your nosey

competitor is only counted once.

Hits: **Hits are a misleading and useless measure.** Hits are the number of requests that your browser makes to a website server in order to display one or more pages.

Imagine a webpage with 10 images. The number of hits for this page would be 11 because the

browser had to request to display 10 images plus the page itself. If a visitors views 4 of these

pages, it would average 44 hits. However, you only had one visitor who in reality visited only

4 pages.

Many uninformed web marketers and web developers still talk in terms of hits. They can quote astronomical number of hits which realistically have nothing to do with the

popularity of your website.

Do not use this measure and count the number of unique visitors instead.

b)   Traffic sources

To understand the 3 different types of traffic source, imagine a pie chart representing the 3 different routes visitors could take to travel to your site: directly, using search engines or being referred to your site by a different website.

What is actually measured is the number of visits to your website within a certain timeframe.

Screen capture copyright: Google

	Search Engines 34.00 (35.42%)
	Direct Traffic 31.00 (32.29%)
	Referring Sites 31.00 (32.29%)
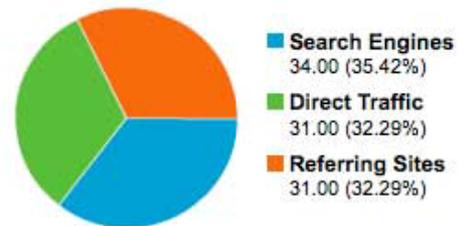
Direct traffic: Number of visits that came directly to your site. It means that these people have entered your website address (e.g. www.whalewatchingherveybay.com.au) in their browser. These people already knew your website address.

Search engines: These are the number of visits that came to your website because it appeared in the results of a search they conducted on a search engine. When websites are not search engine optimised, the percentage of the traffic originating from search engine will be very low.

Referring sites: These are the number of visits that came to your website because it was referenced on another website.

They might have seen a reference to your website on the website of your local tourism organisation.

c)   Content

Statistics programs will not only let you know who your visitors are, and where they come from but it will also gather valuable data to illustrate **what they are doing on your site and in what order**.

It is important to check which of your pages are the most popular, and which pages receive a very low number of visits. If a page received a very low number of visits but it is an important page that you need to promote, make sure you link to it from within the content of your homepage. Check your statistics after one and two weeks and see if this link brought more traffic.

Also check which pages have the highest exit rate. This means that people visit these pages and then decide to leave your website. They probably do so because they didn't find what they expected to find on that page. What you need to do is to work on the content of that page to ensure it meets the needs of your target market. You need to include a call-to-action to entice the visitor to perform an action you want them to do or continue navigating your site rather than leave or exit.

d)   Conversions

A conversion is an action that you want your visitor to take when they are visiting your website.

A conversion could be a booking, establishing contact via email, visiting a certain page, subscribing to your newsletter.

Analytics programs allow you to measure conversions by letting you set up goals. Once your visitor has achieved that goal, the program will count it as one conversion. To learn how to set up goals in Google analytics, watch this presentation: http://services.google.com/analytics/breeze/en/goals/index.html

MEASURING CONVERSIONS IS CRUCIAL AS YOUR WEBSITE IS NOT THERE TO LOOK GOOD BUT TO TURN THESE VISITS INTO PURCHASES OR ENQUIRIES.

4) RELATED MATERIAL

a) Related tutorials

- Organising hosting for my site

- Google Analytics

b) Related websites

- Web analytics tools: www.socialseo.com/big-ol-list-of-the-best-website-analytics-and-web-stat-tools.html

- Google Analytics IQ: http://www.google.com/support/conversionuniversity/bin/topic.py?topic=20332