



Digital and Social  
Media Marketing

III SEMESTER

(Affiliated to Alagappa University)

## Table of Contents

Understanding marketing .....	4
Understanding digital marketing .....	5
Digital audiences .....	6
Segmenting and customising messages.....	6
Measurability .....	7
Digital Marketing Strategy .....	8
What is marketing? .....	8
Understanding marketing strategy .....	9
Business and brand strategy .....	9
Marketing strategy.....	9
Understanding customers.....	10
Market Research .....	11
The importance of market research .....	11
Research methodology .....	12
Primary and secondary research .....	13
The Internet and secondary research.....	13
Content Marketing Strategy .....	15
Defining Content marketing.....	15
Strategic building blocks .....	16
Translating your brand essence.....	16
Market research and consumer personas .....	16
Creating content pillars.....	16
Matching content formats to objectives .....	17
The Content Audit.....	17
Content creation .....	18
Learning from publishers .....	18
Resource planning – thinking like a publisher .....	18
Always on content planning.....	18
Writing for Digital.....	19
Writing for your audience .....	19
The audience of one .....	20
Personas.....	20
Types of web copy .....	21
Short copy .....	22
Call to Action .....	22

Long copy .....	24
Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) .....	28
Introduction .....	28
Understanding SEO .....	28
Search engine friendly website structure .....	29
SEO and key phrases .....	30
Step-by-step key phrase research.....	32
Optimising content for key phrases.....	33
Optimising media .....	34
User insights.....	35
Mobile search.....	35
Affiliate Marketing .....	37
Introduction .....	37
The building blocks of affiliate marketing.....	37
Action and reward.....	38
Advantages and challenges.....	40
Social Media Channels .....	41
Introduction .....	41
Social networking.....	41
Facebook .....	42
Tracking social media campaigns.....	45
Data Analytics .....	46
Introduction .....	46
A world of data.....	46
The type of information captured .....	47

### 35 C Digital & Social Media Marketing

#### **Course Content:**

##### **Module I:**

Introduction to Digital Marketing: Concepts, Key elements, Social media networking sites, characteristics & Implications of Digital Marketing

##### **Module II:**

Search Engine Optimization: Concepts, Benefits of SEO, Search Behavior, Optimization process, Analysis and review. Pay per Click: Concepts, Strength of pay per click, Keyword, Search Campaign Process, Analytics

##### **Module III:**

Digital Display Advertising: Concepts, advantages & Disadvantages of digital display, Ad formats, campaign planning and budget, campaign tracking and optimization. Ecommerce: Portals and Communities – tie ups Email Marketing: Data Email Marketing Process, Design and Content, Delivery and Discovery

##### **Module IV:**

Social Media Marketing: Goals, channels Face book, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, YouTube, insights and analytics. Mobile Marketing: Concepts, SMS content, SMS Strategy, Mobile App, Mobile Advertising

##### **Module V:**

Digital Analytics: Dashboards, Bounce Rate, Site Speed, Site Search, Conversions, Real Time Reporting, Intelligence Reporting, Customized Reporting

**Textbook:** Fundamentals of Digital Marketing by Bhatia Puneet, Pearson Publishers.

#### **Reference Books:**

1. Dave Chaffey, PR Smith, "eMarketing eXcellence – Planning and optimizing your digital marketing", Elsevier publications.
2. Jason Miletsky, "Principles of Internet Marketing" Cengage Learning.
3. Ian Dodson (2016), The Art of Digital Marketing: The Definitive Guide to Creating Strategic, Targeted, and Measurable Online Campaigns, New Jersey, John Wiley & Sons.

## Understanding marketing

Before we can delve into digital marketing, it's important to understand the fundamentals that underpin marketing itself. After all, digital marketing has the same purpose, intentions and objectives.

Dr Philip Kotler defines marketing as follows, "Marketing is that function of the organisation that can keep in constant touch with the organisation's consumers, read their needs, develop products that meet these needs, and build a programme of communications to express the organisation's purposes".

## Understanding digital marketing

How does digital marketing fit into this definition? There is, in fact, no basic difference between 'traditional' marketing and digital marketing. They are one and the same.

Ultimately, the aim of any type of marketing is to keep customers and stimulate sales in the future. Digital communication tools make it possible to connect and build long-term relationships with customers.

Digital marketing helps to create consumer demand by using the power of the interconnected, interactive web. It enables the exchange of currency but, more than that, it enables the exchange of attention for value. This is referred to as the attention economy.

Digital marketing is powerful in two fundamental ways. First, the audience can be segmented very precisely – even down to factors like current location and recent brand interactions – which means that messages can (and must) be personalised and tailored specially for them.

Second, the digital sphere is almost completely measurable – every minute and every click by a customer can be accounted for. In digital you can see exactly how various campaigns are performing, which channels bring the most benefit, and where your efforts are best focused.

## Digital audiences

Both the media landscape and people's media habits have changed. There are many fragmented and highly specific niche communities at play across multiple digital media channels.

At the same time, people's attention is fragmented by the many new media channels and tools available – on top of traditional media, we now have social networks, emails, web tools, mobile devices and more splitting our attention. With so many choices and too little time, audiences have become very skilled at ignoring marketing messages. The key to succeeding is two-fold: ideas must be remarkable, and you must find a niche group who are obsessed with your product and willing to devote their scant attention to it. These fans may tell their friends and, in doing so, spread the word over their interconnected digital networks. If most consumers are likely to ignore your marketing message then the goal is to speak to those who are actually listening.

This leads to another key digital consideration. These days, people themselves are media channels. After all, most of us create, share, comment on and link to content that we find interesting – or that we think will interest our friends and followers. These personalised digital broadcasts are intercepted by people who are interested in what we are saying and have chosen to listen to us. Through this, individuals have become conduits for information, ideas and news in a powerful way.

## Segmenting and customising messages

All of these ideas about niche communities, influential media personalities and fragmented attention spans tie in to the ability to segment online audiences and customise messages.

Segmentation is the process of taking a single, general audience and dividing it up according to specific groupings or characteristics. Once this is done, each group can be targeted differently depending on their needs from the brand. For example, a bank may serve a wide range of customers, but the messages it sends to segments such as young high-income earners, small-business owners and retirees will be very different – necessarily so.

Digital offers a wealth of user information, the ability to target users based on these factors, and the availability of technology for creating and managing large databases. In digital marketing segmentation, customers can be reached across a wide range of communication channels depending on their preferences and needs. The focus should not be on separate channels, but on how digital channels can enable and work with the strengths of what may be

considered ‘traditional’ media such as TV or billboards. Today, digital often plays the role of a bridge for customers between different marketing media, allowing them to respond to a broadcast message on TV through a social media property for instance, where they can obtain a deeper, richer and more interactive brand experience.

Once an audience segment has been created, the message sent to it can also be customised (often automatically) thanks to the availability of the necessary information and digital tools. This can be as small as adding the customer’s name to an email greeting, or as significant as tailoring an entire page of content to their buying history, connections and brand interactions. For example, Amazon provides product recommendations to users based on the items that they have bought as well as similar products purchased by others.

## Measurability

The second factor that distinguishes digital is its measurability. Because of the technology on which it is built, almost every action on the web can be tracked, captured, measured and analysed.

The benefit for marketers should be clear. While traditional media are undoubtedly effective, it’s sometimes hard to know exactly what is working, how well it’s working, and why. Digital can help you pinpoint the success of campaigns down to the channel, audience segment, and even time of day.

Web analytics – the discipline of tracking, analysing and drawing insight from online data – can also go a step further to helping a marketer understand the audience’s intent. While the data merely answers what people are doing, looking at this in conjunction with other insights can help you understand why they are doing it as well.

Measurability in digital is not just about understanding the technology, although that is a necessary first step. It’s about understanding how people and technology intersect – with the ultimate goal of using this information to craft the most effective and relevant marketing messages. As Kotler would say, it circles back to the notion of “creating and satisfying customers at a profit” (Kotler, 1991).

## Digital Marketing Strategy

Pay per click (PPC)	Pay per click is advertising where the advertiser pays only for each click on their advert.
Return on investment (ROI)	The ratio of cost to profit.
Really Simple Syndication (RSS)	RSS allows you to receive/syndicate this information without requiring you constantly to open new pages in your browser
Search engine optimisation (SEO)	SEO is the practice that aims to improve a website's ranking for specific keywords in the search engines
Short Message Service (SMS)	Electronic messages sent on a cellular network.
Simple Object Access Protocol (SOAP)	A simple XML-based protocol to allow for the exchanging of structured information over HTTP.
Strategy	A set of ideas that outline how a product line or brand will achieve its objectives. This guides decisions on how to create, distribute, promote and price the product or service.
Tactic	A specific action or method that contributes to achieving a goal.
eXtensible Markup Language (XML)	A standard used for creating structured documents.

### What is marketing?

A simple definition for marketing is that it is the creation and satisfaction of demand for your product or service. If all goes well, this demand should translate into sales and, ultimately, revenue.

In 2012, Dr Philip Kotler defined marketing as “the science and art of exploring, creating, and delivering value to satisfy the needs of a target market at a profit. Marketing identifies unfulfilled needs and desires. It defines, measures and quantifies the size of the identified market and the profit potential” (Kotler, 2012).

In order to motivate people to pay for your product or service, or to consider your organisation superior to your competitors, you need to create meaningful benefits and value for the consumer. The value that a marketer should seek to create should be equal to or even greater than the cost of the product to the consumer. Doing this often and consistently enough will grow trust in and loyalty towards the brand.



## Understanding marketing strategy

### Business and brand strategy

Before you can delve into marketing strategy, take a step back and consider the business and brand with which you are working. The end-goal of any business is to make money, in one way or another. Business strategy asks the questions: ‘What is the business challenge we are facing that prevents us from making more revenue?’ or, ‘What business objective should we strive for in order to increase the money in the bank?’

The brand is the vessel of value in this equation. The brand justifies why the business matters, and what value it adds to people’s lives. The value of the brand is measured in terms of its equity – how aware are people of the brand? Does it hold positive associations and perceived value? How loyal are people to the brand?

When you have the answer to this question, you can formulate a marketing strategy to address the challenge or objective you’ve discovered.

### Marketing strategy

The purpose of a marketing strategy is to address a business or brand challenge or objective that has been revealed. An effective strategy involves making a series of well-informed decisions about how the brand, product or service should be promoted; the brand that attempts to be all things to all people risks becoming unfocused or losing the clarity of its value proposition.

For example, a new airline would need to consider how it is going to add value to the category and differentiate itself from competitors; whether their product is a domestic or international service; whether its target market would be budget travellers or international and business travellers; and whether the channel would be through primary airports or smaller, more cost-effective airports. Each of these choices will result in a vastly different strategic direction.

To make these decisions, a strategist must understand the context in which the brand operates: what are the factors that affect the business? This means conducting a situational analysis that looks at four pillars:

1. The environment
2. The business
3. The customers
4. The competitors

### Understanding customers

In order truly to understand your customers, you need to conduct market research (discussed in much more detail in the next chapter). Try not to make assumptions about why people like and transact with your brand – you may find their values and motives are quite different from what you thought. Ongoing research will help you build a picture of what particular benefit or feature your business provides to your customers, allowing you to capitalise on this in your marketing content.

One important area on which to focus here is the consumer journey – the series of steps and decisions a customer takes before buying from your business (or not). Luckily, online data analytics allow you to get a good picture of how people behave on your website before converting to customers; other forms of market research will also help you establish this for your offline channels.

On the Internet, a consumer journey is not linear. Instead, consumers may engage with your brand in a variety of ways – for example, across devices or marketing channels – before making a purchase.

User-centric thinking, which involves placing the user at the core of all decisions, is vital when looking at building a successful digital marketing strategy. The digital marketing strategist of today is offered not only a plethora of new tactical possibilities, but also unprecedented ways of measuring the effectiveness of chosen strategies and tactics. Digital also allows greater opportunities for interaction and consumer engagement than were possible in the past,

## Market Research

### The importance of market research

The modern world is unpredictable, and things change very quickly in the digital age. It is becoming increasingly more difficult to keep up with trends, customer needs, popular opinions and competitors – and at the same time, staying at the forefront of the market is vital to success.

So, how can you keep your brand current and ensure you are meeting your customers' needs?

The answer is to conduct market research. Market research helps you make informed business decisions. It involves systematically gathering, recording and analysing data about customers, competitors and the market, and turning this data into insight that can drive marketing strategies and campaigns.

Online market research is the process of using digital tools, data and connections to glean valuable insights about a brand's target audience. In other words, it's the process of learning about your audience by engaging and observing them online. Technology plays a key role in gathering data and connecting with research participants, and makes the whole process quicker and easier to manage than traditional offline research methods.

Traditional and online market research have the same goals and underlying principles, but online market research has the benefit of using digital technology, which provides a range of benefits:

The Internet is always on, meaning that data are readily available at any time.

- Many of the processes for finding, gathering and storing data can be automated (for example, you can get an automatic email alert if someone mentions your brand, or you can set up self-administered digital surveys).
- You have access to a large number of participants around the world at the click of a button.
- A lot of the information you will use is already being automatically collected (such as web analytics and social media data) – all you need to do is access it.
- People are often happy to share their own research, insights and methodologies online, so you can access this trove of resources to inform your own research.

- Online market research can be much more cost effective and quick to set up than traditional research techniques.

There are many reasons why you should conduct regular market research:

- Gain insights into your consumers – this can include:
  - What customers want and need from your brand
  - What customers like and dislike about the brand
  - Why customers buy the brand's products or services
  - Why potential customers might choose your brand over another one
  - Why (or why not) customers make repeat purchases
- Understand the changes in your industry and business
- Discover new market trends on which you can capitalise
- Find new potential sales avenues, customers, products and more
- Find and engage new audiences
- Allow customers to help steer your business

#### Research methodology

A research methodology is the process you should follow in order to conduct

accurate and valuable research. Research should involve certain steps:

1. Establish the goals of the project
2. Determine your sample
3. Choose a data collection method
4. Collect data
5. Analyse the results
6. Formulate conclusions and actionable insights (for example, producing reports)

Most often, market research is focused around specific issues unique to a business or brand. It is therefore not always possible to get hold of comparable information to aid decision making. This is why it can be useful to start from a specific research problem or hypothesis.

Your research question should guide your entire process, and will determine your choice of data collection method (more on those later).

## Primary and secondary research

Research can be based on primary data or secondary data. Primary research is conducted when new data is gathered for a particular product or hypothesis. This is where information does not exist already or is not accessible, and therefore needs to be specifically collected from consumers or businesses. Surveys, focus groups, research panels and research communities can all be used when conducting primary market research.

Secondary research uses existing, published data as a source of information. It can be more cost effective than conducting primary research. The Internet opens up a wealth of resources for conducting this research. The data would, however, originally have been collected for solving problems other than the one at hand, so they may not be sufficiently specific. Secondary research can be useful in identifying problems to be investigated through primary research.

The Internet is a useful tool when conducting both primary and secondary research. Not only are there a number of free tools available when it comes to calculating things such as sample size and confidence levels (see the section on Tools of the trade for some examples), but it is also an ideal medium to reach large numbers of people at a relatively low cost.

### The Internet and secondary research



Research based on secondary data should precede primary data research. It should be used in establishing the context and parameters for primary research:

- The data can provide enough information to solve the problem at hand, thereby negating the need for further research.
- Secondary data can provide sources for hypotheses that can be explored through primary research.
- Sifting through secondary data is a necessary precursor for primary research, as it can provide information relevant to sample sizes and audience, for example.
- The data can be used as a reference base to measure the accuracy of primary research. Companies with online properties have access to a wealth of web analytics data that are recorded digitally. These data can then be mined for insights. It's worth remembering, though,

that it's usually impossible for you to access the web analytics data of competitors – so this method will give you information only about your own customers.

Customer communications are also a source of data that can be used, particularly communications with the customer service department. Committed customers who complain, comment or compliment are providing information that can form the foundation for researching customer satisfaction. Social networks, blogs and other forms of social media have emerged as forums where consumers discuss their likes and dislikes, and can be particularly vocal about companies and products. These data can, and should, be tracked and monitored to establish consumer sentiment. If a community is established for research purposes, these should be considered primary data, but using social media to research existing sentiments is considered secondary research. The Internet is an ideal starting point for conducting secondary research based on published data and findings. But with so much information out there, it can be a daunting task to find reliable resources.

The first point of call for research online is usually a search engine, such as [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) or [www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com). Search engines usually have an array of advanced features, which can aid online research. For example, Google offers:

- Advanced search ([http://www.google.co.za/advanced\\_search?hl=en](http://www.google.co.za/advanced_search?hl=en))
- Google Scholar (<http://scholar.google.co.za/schhp?hl=en>)
- Google Book Search (<http://www.google.co.za/books?hl=en>)
- Google News Archive (<http://news.google.com/newspapers>)

# Content Marketing Strategy

## Defining Content marketing

Content marketing is an umbrella term, one which focuses on matching content (information or entertainment) to your customer needs at whichever stage they are in the buying cycle or customer journey. Unlike TV, where the advertiser pushes messages to a captive audience, the focus is on engaging content, which means that marketers must think like publishers (attracting an audience) rather than seeing themselves as advertisers (buying an audience) of a product. The Internet has, in many respects, cut out the middle man. Consumers and brands can now connect directly through a number of easily accessible online platforms.

*The Content Marketing Institute offers the following definition: Content marketing is a marketing technique of creating and distributing relevant and valuable content to attract, acquire, and engage a clearly defined and understood target audience – with the objective of driving profitable customer action (Content Marketing Institute, 2013).*

This definition applies to all the spaces in which you share content – your website, campaigns and competitions, a company blog or the social media space – as well as the way in which that information is shared.

### **Content components**

- Substance: Who are you trying to reach, and why?
- Structure: Where is your content? How is it organised? How do people find your content?

### **People components**

- Workflow: How does your content happen?
- Governance: Politics, guidelines and standards (Halvorson, 2010)

## Strategic building blocks

### Translating your brand essence

The brand essence is a sentence which sums up the unique attributes of a brand and the basis for its emotional connection with customers. Your brand essence should assist in defining a tone of voice for your brand and the style in which it engages with its customers. The brand essence can be a useful guide for ensuring that the content you create (and your marketing activity) represents the brand appropriately. Some relate this to your brand story. What is your reason for being, and how do you connect that with the interests of your customers?

### Market research and consumer personas

The sweet spot for content marketing lies in an intercept between the marketing goals of a brand, the brand personality as it guides and differentiates that brand in the marketplace, and the consumer motivation for paying any attention to a brand at all. One device that is used in addressing consumer needs is the development of a consumer persona.

A persona is a profile that a writer creates to embody the characteristics of the target audience for whom he or she is writing. Personas are based on the profile of users of your content. Creating a profile is all about considering the characteristics of your readers and their needs and desires. It's important to focus on the motivations of the persona that you may create, rather than exterior signifiers that lead to the creation of a stereotype. The persona assists you in segmenting and understanding your target market and is a framework through which you can guide any content that you create.

### Creating content pillars

Linked to the brand identity are certain themes, which could also be called content pillars. These are areas of focus that support the creation of content that match to a consumer's interest. These themes must be true to the brand essence, not focused directly on sales, and should also speak to the interests of the audience.



For Coca-Cola, for example, consumer interests filtered through the brand essence of ‘Coke brings joy’ could result in the following pillars:

- Friendship
- Sharing is caring
- Spreading smiles.

### Matching content formats to objectives

Information can be presented through any number of mediums, which is both an opportunity and a challenge faced by content marketers. Digital distribution allows for videos, images, interactive infographics and any number of other formats. To gain and keep the attention of consumers/users, it's sometimes not enough to rely simply on text-based forms of content. The role of the content marketer is to select the right medium based on overall objectives, production capabilities, and the needs of the audience

Determining your objectives is an essential part of your marketing planning, and should feed into your content marketing strategy. Understanding the journey your consumers go through as they approach your ultimate sales goal will enable you to match content formats to their needs. A humorous video may be successful in initially making potential customers aware of your brand. Once you have their attention, however, a research paper or useful case study could be more effective in convincing them that you are the best choice in the market.

### The Content Audit

Once you have established your marketing goals, your brand personality and a guiding understanding of who you are trying to reach, the content audit is a sometimes laborious but necessary next step. The content audit involves an audit of all the existing content supplied by the brand – the website, white papers, articles, videos and content shared on social media sites can all be considered.

An assessment can then be made of how well these pieces of content match the strategic needs of the brand and its audience. While you can either thoroughly immerse yourself in this process or attempt to get a more time-efficient overview, the goal is to map what is currently on offer with what is necessary in mind. It is important not just to understand what you have, but also how it is currently organised and accessed by your audience.

## Content creation

### Learning from publishers

The term brand as publisher refers to repositioning the function of the marketer or brand manager. Rather than focusing on the immediate sale or conversion, a publisher focuses on value and interest for the reader, and building a relationship based on supplying information or entertainment that suits the customer's needs. Makeup.com by L'Oreal is an oft-cited example of a brand publishing useful tips and content that does not link to a product or sales directly, but demonstrates how the brand can give consumers the lifestyle they desire.

### Resource planning – thinking like a publisher

Content marketing touches on a number of departments in an organisation. Marketing, sales, customer service, corporate communications, human resources and website management teams should all be aware of the content marketing strategy for a business. Co-ordinating content between these teams can be challenging if not impossible if turnaround times are tight. This is why it is important not only to look at where content production should live in your organisation, but also to map the workflow of content creation, an essential function. Are designers involved? Where does quality control take place? Where can a piece of content be adapted and reused on a different distribution channel?

Some organisations opt to have a central role for someone who oversees content; others build in-house departments. Whether you are outsourcing to a publishing house, or training a team in house, the decision must be made and planned for so that workflow can be mapped in order to facilitate your strategic needs.

### Always on content planning

Given that a large part of the global population is constantly engaging with content via various digital devices and platforms, it is necessary to consider content creation in terms of not only short campaign bursts, but ongoing delivery and engagement.

## Writing for Digital

Online copy is a hardworking multi-tasker. It must provide information to visitors, engage with them, convince them to take a desired action and, all the while, convey brand ethos. It also has to provide context and relevance to search engines. It needs to achieve all this without making it look as if the author is trying too hard.

You will see in this chapter that writing for digital is different from writing for more traditional media. Because of the sheer volume of information on the Internet, quality content is king – many people argue that it is one of the most significant determinants of the success of your online campaigns. Considering it is one of the most direct lines of communication with your consumers, this is not surprising. Online copywriting involves everything from the text on a website to the subject line of an email, and all things in between. From PR articles of 800 words to four line search adverts, if it's being read on a screen, it's online copy. Writing for digital does not mean the traditional rules of writing need to be abandoned. By and large, the foundations remain.

### Writing for your audience

One of the assumptions you can make about writing is that it is done for an audience. In marketing and advertising, knowing your audience is vital: it will guide you in developing your content strategy, determining the topics they are interested in, and help you organise information in a way that makes sense to them. It will direct how you express your copy for your audience.

Ultimately, understanding who you are writing for will ensure that you are able to communicate your message to them and thereby increase the likelihood that your copy will achieve the desired result.

Step one of writing for digital is to ensure you have researched your audience and understand what they want. Once you have a clear idea about this, you can figure out how to fulfil those needs using your copy. Holly Buchanan of Future Now (Buchanan, 2008) summarises this with three questions you should ask:

1. Who is my audience?
2. What actions do I want them to take?
3. What information do they need in order to feel confident taking action?

When you are researching your audience, there are two useful concepts to bear in mind: the audience of one, and personas.

### The audience of one

According to Price and Price, audiences were traditionally thought of as a vast and vaguely defined crowd (Price & Price, 2002). Because the web provides a voice to individuals and niche groups, the concept of this mass audience is disintegrating. Price and Price go on to argue that the Internet has led to an audience of one (Price & Price, 2002). What does this mean? While your audience is not literally one person (and if it is, thank your mum for reading your copy, but spend some time growing your readership), it is not a vast, vaguely defined crowd either. Instead, the web has many niche audiences who are used to being addressed as individuals. When you are writing marketing material, you need to identify that 'individual', investigate what he or she wants, and write as if you are speaking directly to him or her. The individual that you have in mind when you are writing could also be called a persona.

### Personas

A persona is a profile that a writer creates to embody the characteristics of the target audience for whom he or she is writing. Personas are based on the profile of readers of your copy. Creating a profile is all about considering the characteristics of your readers and their needs and desires. When you are building this profile, there are a number of things that you should consider about your audience:

- Are they primarily male, female or a mixture?
- How old are they?
- What are their other demographics and psychographics?

Once you understand these simple characteristics, you can ask yourself some more in-depth questions. If you are selling something, questions include:

- How do they make purchasing decisions?
- Do they compare many service providers before selecting one?
- Do they make lists of questions and call in for assistance with decision making, or do they make purchase decisions spontaneously based on a special offer?

Understanding the reader profiles of your readers is an important process, and the best copy usually results from extensive time spent figuring out your audience. Tailoring your copy to your audience does not necessarily limit you to one persona. Digital copy can be structured so that it caters for several personas. Also consider that your various marketing channels may have different audiences, so ensure that you have a persona for each main platform you use. However, you need to spend time understanding their needs before you are able to write copy that addresses these personas.

### Types of web copy

Whether it is long or short, the purpose of content is to communicate a message. Communication implies that the message has been both received and understood. The considerations covered here are aimed at ensuring that when you distribute a message, it is communicated effectively to the people who need to receive it.

In order to communicate the intended message effectively, content needs to be:

- Clear and concise
- Easy to read
- Well written
- Well structured

Content written for the web can be divided into two broad categories: short copy and long copy. The division is by no means scientific.

### Short copy

On the web, writers often have very little time and space to get a message across to a visitor, and entice them to take action. This is especially true of banner and search adverts, but is also important across all digital marketing disciplines. Probably the most important short copy anywhere is the Call to Action.

### Call to Action

Users scan web pages and look for clues on what to do. Tell them. A Call to Action is a short, descriptive instruction that explicitly tells a reader what to do (for example, 'Click here' or 'Buy this now'). Any time there is an action you want a reader to take, a Call to Action should instruct them on what to do. This means using active verbs when you write, and crafting hyperlinks to be clear instructions that resonate with your visitors at each step in the conversion process.

Banner advertising involves clear Calls to Action, and they can also be used in social media posts, search adverts, content marketing and more. Call to Action copy is not limited to short copy: email newsletters and promotions should also make use of Calls to Action, and we even see them all over web pages.

A good Call to Action resonates with the action the visitor needs to take, as opposed to the technical function that is performed. For example, if a user has entered an email address to sign up to your email newsletter, the action button should say 'Sign up' and not 'Submit'.

Also consider what actions mean offline. For an email newsletter, 'Sign up' can have very different connotations from 'Subscribe'. Furthermore, 'Subscribe' is very different from 'Subscribe for free'. Whereas subscriptions have connotations of costs, 'Sign up' does not carry the same burden. However, 'Subscribe for free' could imply greater value.

## Titles and subject lines

Titles and subject lines often form part of a body of long copy. However, they are important enough to be discussed as stand-alone short copy. Titles and subject lines are there for a very important reason: they tell a reader whether or not they should read further. They are the gateway to your content.

Consider the following titles:

- Guide to online copywriting
- Ten steps to online copywriting that sells

The second title conveys more information and excitement to the reader, which helps the reader to make a decision to read further. Subject lines are like headlines for emails, and can make the difference between an email being deleted instantly and being opened and read. As with a headline, which should be carefully crafted like the headline of a newspaper, use the subject line to make it clear what the email is about. For example, if there is a promotion in the email, consider putting it in the subject line as well.

### Search adverts

Search adverts have very limited space and time to get a message across, as well as plenty of competition for a reader's attention. These four lines of copy need to work hard to ensure a top return on investment.

With a limited character count, it can seem daunting to communicate information that entices the right people to click through, and differentiates you from your competition. Testing variations of copy is the best way to determine what works best for your campaign. While copywriters are not generally responsible for writing paid search ads, they are often brand custodians and should review all copy representing a brand.

## Social copy

Social media allows brands to have conversations with their customers and fans. This gives consumers a powerful voice and the ability to tell brands what they want.

There are a few considerations to keep in mind when creating content for social media:

**Research is vital.** Understand what type of content community members want. Meaningful and relevant content is more likely to be shared.

**Remember that it's a conversation.** Your content must be personable and appealing. Use personality and convey the humanity of your brand in order to generate conversation and encourage comments.

**Write shareable content.** Offer value and be insightful. Ultimately you should aim to create an overall perception that your brand is the thought leader in its industry. Shareable content is credible content.

**Avoid overly promotional content.** Community members are likely to see right through a sales pitch.

**Have a solid communication protocol.** These can be internal guidelines for organisations to follow on how they use and communicate on social media platforms.

## Long copy

Online copywriting is not just about short, sharp Calls to Action and attention grabbing headlines and adverts – it also covers longer pieces of content. Longer copy has advantages. Primarily, it allows you to provide more information and encourage the reader to convert. You can foster a relationship with a reader, whether it is on a blog, through email communications, or through articles and news releases. With more words and space available, you are able to build a voice and a personality into your writing. The expression 'long copy' is somewhat misleading. As online readers behave slightly differently from offline readers, it is unlikely that a skilled copywriter will be called on to create copy for the web that is longer than 800 or 1000 words per page (although, of course, there are exceptions to this). Long copy needs to be structured and formatted so that it's easy for attention starved web readers to digest. Web users



tend to scan pages quickly to determine whether or not they will read further. Specifically, in longer copy, you need to take this into consideration.

There are many types of long online copy. Here, we will focus on a few that are useful for marketing:

- News releases
- Articles for online syndication
- Emails
- Blog posts
- Advertorials
- Website

#### News releases

The news release is a staple of public relations. As the Internet grows, so does the overlap between PR and marketing. As a result, many copywriters are called upon to write news releases for online distribution as this is a standardised format for releasing information. Originally intended to provide information for journalists, news releases are increasingly being read without going through the journalists first. This means that they should be written in the brand tone, be accessible to the general public, and be optimised and formatted according to the principles of good web writing (more on those later). Also remember to focus on a compelling headline to win over your reader.

#### Articles for online syndication

Online article syndication involves writing articles that are in no way a direct promotion of your brand. In other words, they are not press releases. These articles are written to provide information and valuable content to readers about something which is indirectly related to your product or service. For example, a hotel management company could write articles about travel tips and advice, while a pet food seller could create content around ways to keep pets healthy and happy.

Articles are submitted to online article directories, from where they are picked up and republished on other sites. As the articles contain links and key phrases relevant to your site, the benefits for SEO can be excellent. But the strategy won't work unless people want to read your articles – so they need to be interesting, informative, and not just thinly disguised adverts. You are aiming to inform your audience, position your brand as an expert in your field and demonstrate authority and thought leadership. While this practice is not as widely used as it once was, a well-executed online article syndication strategy can still yield results.

## Emails

Email as a channel is an integral part of many online marketing strategies. Of course, content is a huge part of this; it comprises the words in an email with which a user engages. By virtue of their nature, emails are the ideal medium for communicating and building relationships with your consumers. Successful email campaigns provide value to their readers. This value can vary from campaign to campaign. Newsletters can offer:

- Humour and entertainment
- Research and insight
- Information and advice
- Promotions and special offers



## Blogging

Blogs can be very successful marketing tools. They're an excellent way to communicate with staff, investors, industry members, journalists and prospective customers. Blogging also helps to foster a community around a brand, and provides an opportunity to garner immediate feedback. This is an audience made up of players vital to the success of a company – which is why it is important to get blogging right. A key consideration is the quality of your headlines - you have to convince your reader to grant you attention.

There is plenty to be gained from the process of blogging and obviously, the value, as with email marketing, lies in the content. This communication channel provides an opportunity for you to foster an online identity for your brand as well as giving your company a voice and a personality.

## Website copy

Digital copywriters need to structure content effectively so that users want to engage on the site and read on. Some ways to create digital copy that is usable and appropriate for an online audience include:

- Writing text that can be easily scanned.
- Using meaningful headings and sub-headings.
- Highlighting or bolding key phrases and words.
- Using bulleted lists.
- Having a well-organised site.
- Limiting each paragraph to one main idea or topic. The leading sentence should give a clear indication of what the paragraph is about. Readers can scan each paragraph without missing any essential information.
- Cutting the fluff. Get rid of meaningless turns of phrase and words that bulk up copy unnecessarily.
- Removing redundancies. These often creep into writing by accident, but you should work to eliminate them in order to get to the point.

## Writing for mobile

Mobile websites differ from traditional websites for various reasons – these are explored in the chapter on Mobile Marketing. Here are some points on creating digital copy for mobile websites that encourages interaction and achieves marketing and business goals:

- Get to the point. With limited screen space, there really is no room for wordy text. You need to determine exactly what your message is and get to the point quickly!
- Put the important bits up front. This includes contact information and navigation links. Word these clearly so that people can take the right action.
- Condense information to its simplest form. But ensure that it still makes sense and is grammatically sound.

# Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)

## Introduction

With millions of people performing billions of searches each day to find content on the Internet (Sullivan, 2013), it makes sense that marketers want their products to be findable online. Search engines, the channels through which these searches happen, use closely guarded algorithms to determine the results displayed. Determining what factors these algorithms take into account has led to a growing practice known as search engine optimisation.

Search engine optimisation (SEO) is the practice of optimising a website to achieve the highest possible ranking on the search engine results pages (SERPs). Someone who practices SEO professionally is also known as an SEO (search engine optimiser).

Google says it uses more than 200 different factors in its algorithm to determine relevance and ranking (Avellanosa, 2012). None of the major search engines disclose the elements they use to rank pages, but there are many SEO practitioners who spend time analysing patent applications to try to determine what these are. SEO can be split into two distinct camps: white hat SEO and black hat SEO (with, of course, some grey hat wearers in between). Black hat SEO refers to trying to game the search engines. These SEOs use dubious means to achieve high rankings, and their websites are occasionally blacklisted by the search engines. White hat SEO, on the other hand, refers to working within the parameters set by search engines to optimise a website for better user experience. Search engines want to send users to the website that is best suited to their needs, so white hat SEO should ensure that users can find what they are looking for.

## Understanding SEO

Search engines need to help users find what they're looking for. To make sure they list the best results first, they look for signals of:

- Popularity
- Authority
- Relevance
- Trust

- Importance

SEO, also called organic or natural optimisation, involves optimising websites to achieve high rankings on search engines for certain selected key phrases. Generally, techniques used for optimising on one search engine will also help efforts across others.

SEO can be divided into two main strategies:

1. On-page optimisation is achieved by making changes to the HTML code, content and structure of a website, making it more accessible for search engines, and by extension, easier for users to find.
2. Off-page optimisation is generally focused on building links to the website, and covers activities like social media and digital PR. SEO is an extremely effective way of generating new business to a site. It is a continuous process and a way of thinking about how search engines see your website, and how users use search engines to find your website. It's search psychology.

Search engine optimisation is a fairly technical practice but it can easily be broken down into five main areas:

- A search engine friendly website structure
- A well-researched list of key phrases
- Content optimised to target those key phrases
- Link popularity
- User insights

Search engine friendly website structure

Search engines encounter two kinds of obstacles:

- Technical challenges that prevent the search engine spider from accessing content.
- A competitive marketing environment where everyone wants to rank highly.

To ensure that search engines can access your content, you must remove technical barriers. Those who want to achieve the best results must follow best practices. These best practices are outlined in the chapter on Web Development and Design.

The key is to make sure that there are direct HTML links to each page you want the search engines to index. The most important pages should be accessible directly from the home page of your website.

The information architecture, or how content is planned and laid out, has important usability and SEO implications. Users want to find what they are looking for quickly and easily, while website owners want search engine spiders to be able to access and index all applicable pages. In fact, Google has released an update that penalises sites with poor user experience (such as no content above the fold, or a high bounce rate) (Cutts, 2012).

There are times when user experience and SEO can be at odds with each other, but usually if you focus on building usable, accessible websites, you have made them search engine friendly as well.

Another technical challenge to search engines is Flash. For the most part, search engines struggle to crawl and index Flash sites. There are some workarounds, but the best approach from an SEO perspective is to avoid building sites or delivering key content in Flash. Instead, use HTML5, which provides similar interactivity and visuals while remaining easily crawlable.

#### SEO and key phrases

How do you start building your key phrase list? It requires a little thought and a fair amount of research and insight, using tools that are readily available to help you grow and refine your list of keywords.

Key phrases are the very foundation of search. When a user enters a query on a search engine, he or she uses the words he or she thinks are relevant to the search. The search engine then returns those pages it believes are most relevant to the words the searcher used – and, increasingly, the implied meaning of the search.

Search engines have built a sophisticated understanding of semantics and the way in which we use language. So, if a user searches for ‘car rental’, the search engine will look for pages that are relevant to ‘car rental’ as well as, possibly, ‘car hire’, ‘vehicle hire’, and so forth. Search engines have also built up knowledge around common misspellings, synonyms and related searches.

Because of this, it is crucial that you implement keywords that are likely to be used by their target audience. Websites need to appear when their potential customers are searching for them. A large part of keyword research is understanding search psychology. When we build our key phrase lists, we are tapping into the mental process of searchers and putting together the right mix of keywords to target.

There are four things to consider when choosing a keyword:

### ***Search volume***

How many searchers are using that phrase to find what they want? For example, there is an estimated monthly search volume of over 338 million for the keyword 'hotel', but an estimated 6 600 searches per month for a key phrase such as 'Cape Town Waterfront hotel'.

### ***Competition***

How many other websites out there are targeting that same phrase? For example, Google finds over 2 800 000 000 results for 'hotel', but only 3 210 000 for 'Cape Town Waterfront Hotel'.

### ***Propensity to convert***

What is the likelihood that the searcher using that key phrase is going to convert on your site? A conversion is a desired action taken by the visitor to your website. Related to propensity to convert is the relevance of the selected term to what you are offering. If you are selling rooms at a hotel at the V&A Waterfront, which of the two terms ('hotel' or 'Cape Town Waterfront hotel') do you think will lead to a higher rate of conversions?

### ***Value per lead***

What is the average value per prospect attracted by the keyword? Depending on the nature of your website, the average value per lead varies. Using the hotel example again, consider these two terms:

'luxury Cape Town hotel' and 'budget Cape Town hotel'

Both are terms used by someone wanting to book a hotel in Cape Town, but it is likely that someone looking for a luxury hotel is intending to spend more. That means that that particular lead has a higher value, particularly if you have a hotel booking website that offers a range of accommodation.

## Step-by-step key phrase research

### Step 1: Brainstorm

Think about the words you would use to describe your business, and about the questions or needs of your customers that it fulfils. How would someone ask for what you are offering? Consider synonyms and misspellings as well.

Bear in mind that people may not ask for your services in the same way as you describe them. You may sell ‘herbal infusions’, whereas most people would ask for ‘herbal teas’, and some might even request a ‘tisane’.

Even common words are often misspelt, and you may need to consider common misspellings – for example, ‘jewelry’ or ‘morgage’.

### Step 2: Gather data

Two ways in which to gather accurate key phrase data are to survey customers and to look at your website referral logs.

Look to see what terms customers are already using to find you, and add those to your list. If they are already sending you some traffic, it is worth seeing if you can increase that traffic.

### Step 3: Use keyword research tools

There are several tools available for keyword discovery, and some of them are free. Some tools will scan your website and suggest keywords based on your current content. Most will let you enter keywords, and will then return suggestions based on past research data, along with:

- Similar keywords
- Common keywords used with that keyword
- Common misspellings
- Frequency of the keywords in search queries
- Industry-related keywords
- Keywords that are sending traffic to your competitors



- How many sites are targeting your keywords

See Tools of the Trade for some tools that you can use. Bearing in mind the factors that make a good keyword, you need to aim for the right mix of keywords. Low-volume terms with low levels of competition may be a good way to get traffic in the short term, but don't be scared off by bigger competition in the high-value, high-volume areas. It may take longer to get there, but once you do, the revenue can make it all worthwhile

### Optimising content for key phrases

Once keywords and phrases are selected, we need to ensure the site contains content to target them. You must ensure that the content is properly structured and that it sends signals of relevance. Content is the most important part of your website: create relevant, targeted content aimed at your selected key phrases. As you know from the content strategy chapter, content already has several roles to play on your site:

- It must provide information to visitors.
- It must engage with them.
- It must persuade them to do what you want.

Now it must also send signals of relevance to search engines. You need to use the keywords on the content page in a way that search engines will pick up, and users will understand.

Each web page should be optimised for two to three key phrases: the primary key phrase, the secondary and the tertiary. A page can be optimised for up to five key phrases, but it is better to have more niche pages than fewer unfocused pages.

Here are some guidelines:

1. Title tag: use the key phrase in the title and as close to the beginning as possible.
2. H1 header tag: use the key phrase in the header tag, and as much as possible in the other H tags.
3. Body content: use the key phrase at least three times, more if there is a lot of content and it makes sense to. You should aim for about 350 words of content. But don't overdo it! That could look like spam to the search engines.
4. Bold: use <strong> tags around the keyword at least once.

5. URL: try to use the key phrase in your page URL.
6. Meta description: use it at least once in the meta description of the page, which should entice users to clickthrough to your site from the SERP.
7. Link anchor text: try to ensure that the keyword is used in the anchor text of the pages linking to you.
8. Domain name: if possible, use the key phrase in your domain name.

### Optimising media

Images, video and other digital assets should also be optimised with the relevant keywords. Search engines cannot decipher multimedia content as well as text, so they rely on the way that media is described to determine what it is about. Screen readers also read out these descriptions, which can help visually impaired users make sense of a website. In addition, media such as images and video are often also shown on the SERPs. Proper optimisation can give a brand more ownership of the SERP real estate, and can also be used effectively to target competitive terms.

Just as rich media can help emphasise the content on a page to a visitor, they can also help search engines to rank pages, provided they are labelled correctly.

Here are some ways to optimise images with key phrases for SEO:

- Use descriptive, keyword-filled filenames.
- Use specific alt tags and title attributes.
- Add meta information to the image. Make sure this information is relevant.
- Use descriptive captions, and keep relevant copy close to the corresponding media. For example, an image caption and neighbouring text will help to describe content of the image.
- Make sure that the header tags and images are relevant to each other. Also think about what other digital assets you have, and whether these can be optimised in line with your key phrase strategy. For example, consider app store optimisation (ASO) – the process of optimising your mobile and web apps for the specific web stores they are distributed in.

## User insights

Search engines want their results to be highly relevant to web users, to make sure that web users keep returning to the search engine for future searches. And the best way to establish what is relevant to users? By looking at how they use websites, of course!

User data is the most effective way of judging the true relevance and value of a website. For example, if users arrive on a website and leave immediately, chances are it wasn't relevant to their query in the first place. However, if a user repeatedly visits a website and spends a long time there, it is probably extremely relevant. When it comes to search engines, relevant, valuable sites are promoted, and irrelevant sites are demoted.

### How do search engines access this data?

Search engines use cookies to maintain a history of a user's search activity. This will include keywords used, and websites visited from the search engine. Search engines gather data on the clickthrough rate of results, and on bounce rates. Site speed, that is, the performance of your website, is a contributing factor to ranking in Google. Google confirmed in April 2010 that this was one of over 200 ranking signals (Singhal, 2010).

#### 4. Optimise for social search engines.

While Google is the biggest search engine worldwide, YouTube is the second biggest. Even within social properties, users still use search to find the content they are looking for. Content that is housed on these properties should be optimised for the relevant social search engine as well.

## Mobile search

As web-enabled mobile devices continue to grow in the market, and become easier to use, mobile search remains a key growth area. Mobile searches tend to be different from desktop searches. They are more navigational in nature (users tend to know where they want to end up), and users are often looking for concise, actionable answers.

Mobile search input can also be different from desktop search. As well as typing in search keywords, mobile users can search by voice, or by using images or scanning barcodes. As with mobile web development, mobile SEO is a little different from desktop SEO, although the

fundamental principles remain the same. Build usable and accessible sites with great content, and you've already come a long way. For example, a user may search for 'plumber london', and the search will know to return results for London plumbers. These may even be returned on a map. However, a user in London may search just for 'plumber'. The search can infer from the user's IP address that the user is in London, and still return results for London plumbers (since someone searching for this term is likely to be looking for a nearby service).

For search engines to return location-relevant results, they need to know the location of things being searched for. This is often determined from sites that include the name and address of a business. Note that this site may not be yours. Location results are often determined from various review sites, and the results can include some of those reviews.

Search engines also allow businesses to 'claim' their locations. A business can verify itself through a process with the search engine, and ensure that location information is correct. Google+ Local is a good example of this – the business can claim a listing, add their details, and even receive reviews.

Don't create pages that include malicious behaviours such as phishing or installing viruses, trojans, or other malware.

- Avoid 'doorway' pages created just for search engines or other 'cookie cutter' approaches, such as affiliate programmes with little or no original content. If your site participates in an affiliate programme, make sure that your site adds value. Provide unique and relevant content that gives users a reason to visit your site first.
- Avoid link farms and focus on attracting quality, valuable links. The bottom line: design websites for users first and foremost, and don't try to trick the search engines. It will only be a matter of time before they uncover the black hat techniques.

# Affiliate Marketing

## Introduction

If you recommend a restaurant to a friend, and that friend visits the restaurant because of your recommendation, the restaurant's revenue will have increased because of your referral. This is 'word of mouth' marketing. But you, as the referrer, do not see any of the cash benefit that the restaurant does.

Imagine that the restaurant gave you 10% of the bill for every person you referred. They would be paying you a finder's fee for new customers. There are a number of businesses that market in this way offline. Brokers for insurance products are an example, but these referrals can be hard to track. Online, they are very easy to track. This system of reward, where compensation is based on referral, is called affiliate marketing, and this term is used to describe this type of marketing in an online environment.

Affiliate marketing occurs where a third-party advertises products or services on behalf of a merchant in return for an agreed commission for a sale or lead.

Because of this, affiliates are sometimes viewed as an extended sales force for a website.

### The building blocks of affiliate marketing

**AVIDUS ACADEMY OF MANAGEMENT**

The core of affiliate marketing is a simple process:

1. An affiliate refers potential customers to a merchant's website or other offsite destination (such as a Facebook tab).
2. Some of those customers perform a desired action.
3. The merchant rewards the affiliate for each desired action that results from the affiliate's referral.

However, there are many different ways in which an affiliate might market a merchant's offering; there are many different actions that can be rewarded; and, most importantly, there needs to be some way to keep track of the whole process.

## Action and reward

Affiliate marketing can be used to promote any type of website – there just needs to be an agreed-upon action resulting in an affiliate earning commission. Different types of merchants will have different required actions. The actions and the type of commission can be summed up as:

- Cost per Action (CPA) – a fixed commission for a particular action.
- Cost per Lead (CPL) – a fixed commission for a lead (that is, a potential sale).
- Revenue share (also CPS or Cost per Sale) – an agreed-on percentage of the purchase amount.
- Cost per Click (CPC) – a fixed amount for each clickthrough to the website (although this forms a very small part of the affiliate marketing mix). Let's look at an example of each of the first three actions above:

### CPA

Here, the action could be anything from downloading a white paper or software to signing up to a newsletter.

### CPL

Merchants who offer CPL commissions are usually those who need to convert a lead into a sale offline. This means they will generally need to complete the transaction over the phone with the customer, or that the process is quite complicated. Typically, insurance companies and banking institutions offer this type of commission. Membership sites that offer a free trial period, such as online DVD rental, can also use this commission structure.

You may be wondering why merchants are willing to pay for a lead, instead of only for completed transactions.

Affiliates prefer this model, as they are not in control of the offline conversion process. It is the merchant's job to be able to complete the transaction. Some merchants may be wary that the leads will not be of a high enough quality. This is why they will usually have conversion targets with which the leads generated need to comply as a quality control.

## Revenue share

Revenue sharing is the ideal commission structure as both the merchant and the affiliate are rewarded for performance – the more sales, the more revenue generated for the merchant, and the more commission for the affiliate. Websites where a sale can be performed instantly are ideal for revenue sharing. Online retailers and instant online travel agents are perfect examples of merchants who offer a revenue share commission. The affiliate earns a percentage of the sale.

Merchants tend to structure their commission offering so that affiliates who perform better earn a higher commission.

For example, a merchant may offer the following tiers of commission:

- 1–10 sales: 10% commission
- 11–25 sales: 11% commission
- 26–50 sales: 12% commission
- 51 or more sales: 15% commission

We have seen that there are different types of actions that can result in commission being awarded, and that these usually suit the website that is being promoted. This means that any industry that is online can most likely be promoted through affiliate marketing.

Affiliates have many options open to them to promote merchants' websites. But before we get to that, we need to take a look at tracking – the thread that holds it all together.

## Tracking

When the customer completes the required action on the merchant's website, the cookie will allow the tracking software to collect the information needed to award the commission. For example, if a customer were to use an affiliate link

To purchase a gift from a merchant (using the same URL as before), the following information would be collected:

- Referring URL and affiliate
- Total sale amount for commission

- Date and time of sale
- Unique order number of sale All this information will allow the merchant to confirm that the sale is valid, as well as the amount of commission that is due, without ever releasing any of the customer's personal information.

Affiliate tracking software collects information even if no action is completed. This is vital to the affiliates and to the merchants to see where they can optimise their campaign.

Information collected includes:

- Impressions
- Clicks
- Conversions

Affiliates will use this information to determine the success of their marketing efforts. Remember that affiliates invest money in marketing various merchants, and they are rewarded only on commission. An affiliate will use the above information to determine whether or not to promote a merchant, and how much they should invest in promoting a particular merchant.

Merchants can use the information on their campaign to determine how best to optimise. For example, if a particular type of banner seems to be doing better than others, they could use that to improve other banners that they offer.

### Advantages and challenges

While affiliate marketing certainly deserves increasing recognition for its key role in growth, it is still a young industry with all the growing pains that that involves.

What is holding people back?

- There are seldom contracts in place between affiliates and merchants. For a merchant, this means an affiliate could decide to stop promoting the programme, with no notice given. This could lead to a sudden traffic and sales drop, depending on how reliant the merchant had been on that affiliate. Similarly, merchants may decide to terminate a programme, meaning a loss of revenue for affiliates. Particularly if little notice is given, affiliates may have spent time and money setting up promotions, only to have the campaign pulled out from underneath them.



## Social Media Channels

### Introduction

In many ways, social media epitomises what the web is about: collaborating and sharing content, ideas and information. Social media is behind the explosion of content on the Internet, as various channels have allowed anyone with an Internet connection to create and share content easily and for free. Because social media has so many participants, it is also very dynamic. In fact, this is the chapter that is most likely to be out of date the second this book has gone to print.

Simply put, social media are media (from written to visual to audio) that are designed to be shared. Sharing means that it easy to comment on, send and copy the media, and that there are no high costs associated with this. And, because of the connected nature of the Internet, it means that sharing, commenting and viewing can all be tracked and measured.

Social media are also referred to as Web 2.0, consumer-generated media, citizen media and new media. In fact, comparing social media to traditional media is probably the most useful way of defining what exactly this means.

### Social networking

Social networking refers to forming and maintaining online social networks for communities. The communities are people who share real-world connections, interests and activities, or are interested in exploring the interests and activities of others. And to complete the definition: building these social networks requires the use of software.

Social networking is all about using the tools of the Internet to connect and build relationships with others. Social networking sites such as Facebook ([www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)), MySpace ([www.myspace.com](http://www.myspace.com)) and LinkedIn ([www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com)) allow users to create personal profiles and then interact with their connections by sharing media, sending messages and blogging. Not only do social networking sites allow you to interact with the members of your own virtual Rolodex, but they also allow you to extend beyond your personal network. In addition, organisations – anything from businesses to bands and charities – can also create and maintain profiles on many of these networks.

Social networks have created new meaning for the term ‘friend’, with many connections existing solely online. In the realm of social networking, it is unnecessary to have met someone in order to connect with them.

Personal profile pages remove much of the anonymity of the Internet. Users of social networks reveal a great deal of information about themselves, from basic demographics such as age, gender and location, to nuanced and detailed lists of likes and dislikes. They are also divulging this information to the networks, and hence to the networks’ advertisers to allow more relevant targeting. Users tend not to be aware of the data that is amassing in their online profile, and this can lead to privacy risks and concerns.

Social networks can be general, such as Facebook, or niche, such as LinkedIn or Dopplr (www.dopplr.com). LinkedIn is a network for business professionals. Members connect to people they know professionally and are able to recommend members they have worked with. Dopplr is a social network for frequent travellers. Members can share their trips, and make plans to meet up when schedules overlap.

There are social networking platforms that allow anyone to build their own social network using the underlying technology of the platform.

### Facebook

Facebook has become the most dominant personal social network in the world. According to official figures, over 1 billion people are now registered on the platform – that’s one in every seven humans on earth – and more than half of them are active on Facebook every day (Facebook, 2013). Because people are spending so much time on Facebook, advertisers and marketers naturally want to capitalise on this audience.

Over the past few years, Facebook has launched a number of ways for brands and organisations to use the social network to connect with potential customers.

### Pages

A Page is profile for a brand, organisation or celebrity. It looks very similar to a personal profile, and in the same way in which two people can add each other as friends on Facebook, people can choose to connect with a brand on Facebook by liking its Page.

Each Page consists of the following elements:

- A cover image (the large banner at the top)
- A profile image that represents the brand
- Some 'About' information that can include links and more detailed information
- The 'Wall', where the brand's posts and interactions are displayed in a chronological timeline

Tabs are distinct pages of information on the brand's Page. Tabs can be used to house richer, more graphic content. Information in the tabs can be served through an application or through an iFrame, allowing for interactions within them.

### Applications

Applications are developed by third parties, and include games such as Farmville ([www.facebook.com/farmville](http://www.facebook.com/farmville)), contests, virtual gifting, photo uploaders, interactive tools, and more.

Applications are a way for organisations to create branded experiences for their Facebook fans. Sharing can be built right into the application, exposing it to the user's Facebook friends, and making it easier for the user to invite friends to use the application as well.

Facebook makes frequent updates that may affect applications, so they've made several developer resources available. The one to watch is the Developer Roadmap ([developers.facebook.com/roadmap](http://developers.facebook.com/roadmap)).

### Promotions and competitions

Brands can run promotions and competitions through their Facebook Pages, but must ensure that they comply with Facebook's terms and conditions. Wildfire ([www.wildfireapp.com](http://www.wildfireapp.com)) is an application that can be used to run promotions on Facebook.

## Facebook Connect

Facebook Connect allows users to log into services external to Facebook using their Facebook login details. They can then grant permission to have information, such as profile data and photos, shared between Facebook and the service they have logged in to. This can make it easier for users to log in to new services without having to create new usernames and passwords. They can also easily see who else in their social circle is using that service, and share information back to their social circle.

## Like button

The Facebook Like button allows users to indicate that they like or recommend content, images, media or websites, and to share that recommendation with their social circle. The Like button can be used by any website, allowing visitors to recommend their site and content easily, and to see who of their friends might like the same content.

## News feed

The news feed is the stream of content that users see when they log in to Facebook. It's a selection of recent posts and updates from their friends, and from the brands with which they have connected on Facebook. Facebook uses an algorithm, based on relevance to the user, to determine what information to show in their news feed. This algorithm is called the News Feed Algorithm, and is a more sophisticated version of the original algorithm, which was called EdgeRank. According to an official Facebook update, the following factors are considered by the algorithm

before it displays content in a user's news feed:

- Is this timely and relevant content?
- Is this content from a source you would trust?
- Would you share it with friends or recommend it to others?
- Is the content genuinely interesting to you or is it trying to game News Feed distribution? (e.g., asking for people to like the content)
- Would you call this a low quality post or meme?
- Would you complain about seeing this content in your News Feed? (Facebook, 2013)

Brands want their Page posts, stories and comments to appear in a user's news feed. The user is more likely to interact with content in the news feed, or to follow through to the page, than if there were nothing to prompt them. It is therefore vital to ensure that your page content takes this algorithm into consideration.

### **Tracking social media campaigns**

As with any digital marketing tactic, you need to be able to track and measure your campaigns in order to understand how successful they are, and what you can do to improve them.

With most social networking channels, you do not actually host your presence, which means that custom tracking is limited. There is often a strong reliance on the built-in tracking offered by the various channels, although new third-party tracking services are emerging and offering competitive and sophisticated tools (often for a fee). In some cases, it is also possible to integrate tracking to some extent if you are directing traffic to a web property that you own.

#### **Facebook Insights**

Facebook Insights is available to page administrators, and provides data on how people are interacting with your content and your page. This includes demographic information about the people connecting with your content (age, gender and location breakdown), which tabs and which content posts are seen and interacted with, and how many people hide your content from their news feed, and when. There is also data that shows how people got to your page.

#### **YouTube Analytics**

YouTube Analytics is available to all YouTube users for their videos and channels. As well as showing video views and popularity broken up by geographical territory, there is some demographic information shown as well. Discovery data shows how people got to your video. One of the most useful reports for any video is audience attention, showing when people stop viewing a video, or rewind sections of video, and comparing this to videos of a similar kind.

#### **Twitter Analytics**

Currently, Twitter Analytics is available only to Twitter advertisers, but there are a number of tools that use the Twitter API to provide analysis. HootSuite's Twitter management tools have built in analytics ([www.hootsuite.com](http://www.hootsuite.com)), and Twitalyzer ([www.twitalyzer.com](http://www.twitalyzer.com)) is another tool that can provide insightful data. Important metrics for Twitter include how many people interact with your content by clicking through on links, replying to you or retweeting messages.

# Data Analytics

## Introduction

Picture the scene: you've opened up a new fashion retail outlet in the trendiest shopping centre in town. You've spent a small fortune on advertising and branding. You've gone to great lengths to ensure that you're stocking all of the prestigious brands. Come opening day, your store is inundated with visitors and potential customers.

And yet, you are hardly making any sales. Could it be because you have one cashier for every hundred customers? Or possibly it's the fact that the smell of your freshly painted walls chases customers away before they complete a purchase?

While it can be difficult to isolate and track the factors affecting your revenue in this fictional store, move it online and you have a wealth of resources available to assist you with tracking, analysing and optimising your performance.

To a marketer, the Internet offers more than just new avenues of creativity. By its very nature, it allows you to track each click to your site and through your site. It takes the guesswork out of pinpointing the successful elements of a campaign, and can show you very quickly what's not working. It all comes down to knowing where to look, what to look for, and what to do with the information you find.

In this chapter, you will learn:

- How to set solid objectives, goals and measurements for your digital marketing campaigns
- How to capture web analytics data, and what data you can find
- Techniques and guidelines for analysing data to better understand your web visitors

## A world of data

Another consideration to keep in mind is that data can be found and gathered from a variety of sources – you don't need to restrict yourself simply to website-based analytics. To get a full picture of audience insights, try to gather as wide a variety of information as you can. Some places to look:

**Online data** – aside from your website, look at other places your audience interacts with you online, such as social media, email, forums and more. Most of these will have their own data-gathering tools (for example, look at Facebook Insights or your email service provider's send logs).

**Databases** – look at any databases that store relevant customer information, like your contact database, CRM information or loyalty programs. These can often supplement anonymous data with some tangible demographic insights

**Software data** – data might also be gathered by certain kinds of software (for example, some web browsers gather information on user habits, crashes, problems and so on). If you produce software, consider adding a data-gathering feature (with the user's permission, of course) that captures usage information that you can use for future updates.

**App store data** – app store analytics allows companies to monitor and analyse the way people download, pay for and use their apps. Marketplaces like the Google and Apple app stores should provide some useful data here.

**Offline data** – and don't forget all the information available off the web – such as point-of-sale records, customer service logs, in-person surveys, in-store foot traffic, and much more.

The type of information captured

KPIs are the metrics that help you understand how well you are meeting your objectives. A metric is a defined unit of measurement. Definitions can vary between various web analytics vendors depending on their approach to gathering data, but the standard definitions are provided here.

Web analytics metrics are divided into:

- Counts – these are the raw figures that will be used for analysis.
- Ratios – these are interpretations of the data that is counted.

Metrics can be applied to three different groupings:

- Aggregate – all traffic to the website for a defined period of time.
- Segmented – a subset of all traffic according to a specific filter, such as by campaign (PPC) or visitor type (new visitor vs. returning visitor).

- Individual – the activity of a single visitor for a defined period of time. Here are some of the key metrics you will need to get started on with website analytics.

### **Building-block terms**

These are the most basic web metrics. They tell you how much traffic your website is receiving. For example, looking at returning visitors can tell you how well your website creates loyalty; a website needs to grow the number of visitors who come back. An exception may be a support website – repeat visitors could indicate that the website has not been successful in solving the visitor's problem. Each website needs to be analysed based on its purpose.

- Hit – one-page load (though this is an outdated terms that we recommend you avoid using).
- Page – unit of content (so downloads and Flash files can be defined as pages).
- Page views – the number of times a page was successfully requested.

Visit or session – an interaction by an individual with a website consisting of one or more page views within a specified period of time.

- Unique visitors – the number of individual people visiting the website one or more times within a set period of time. Each individual is counted only once.

o New visitor – a unique visitor who visits the website for the first time ever in the period of time being analysed.

o Returning visitor – a unique visitor who makes two or more visits (on the same device and browser) within the time period being analysed.

### **Visit characteristics**

These are some of the metrics that tell you how visitors reach your website, and how they move through the website. The way that a visitor navigates a website is called a click path. Looking at the referrers, both external and internal, allows you to gauge the click path that visitors take.

- Entry page – the first page of a visit.
- Landing page – the page intended to identify the beginning of the user experience resulting from a defined marketing effort.
- Exit page – the last page of a visit.
- Visit duration – the length of time in a session



Referrer – the URL that originally generated the request for the current page.

- o Internal referrer – a URL that is part of the same website.
- o External referrer – a URL that is outside of the website.
- o Search referrer – a URL that is generated by a search function.
- o Visit referrer – a URL that originated from a particular visit.
- o Original referrer – a URL that sent a new visitor to the website.
- Clickthrough – the number of times a link was clicked by a visitor.
- Clickthrough rate – the number of times a link was clicked divided by the number of times it was seen (impressions).
- Page views per visit – the number of page views in a reporting period divided by the number of visits in that same period to get an average of how many pages are being viewed per visit.

### **Content characteristics**

When a visitor views a page, they have two options: leave the website, or view another page on the website. These metrics tell you how visitors react to your content. Bounce rate can be one of the most important metrics that you measure. There are a few exceptions, but a high bounce rate usually means high dissatisfaction with a web page.

- Page exit ratio – number of exits from a page divided by total number of page views of that page.
- Single page visits – visits that consist of one page, even if that page was viewed a number of times.
- Bounces (or single page view visits) – visits consisting of a single page view.
- Bounce rate – single page view visits divided by entry pages.

## **Conversion metrics**

These metrics give insight into whether you are achieving your analytics goals (and through those, your overall website objectives).

- Event – a recorded action that has a specific time assigned to it by the browser or the server.
- Conversion – a visitor completing a target action.

## **Mobile metrics**

When it comes to mobile data, there are no special, new or different metrics to use. However, you will probably be focusing your attention on some key aspects that are particularly relevant here – namely technologies and the user experience.

- Device category – whether the visit came from a desktop, mobile or tablet device.
- Mobile device info – the specific brand and make of the mobile device.
- Mobile input selector – the main input method for the device (e.g. touchscreen, click wheel, stylus).
- Operating system – the OS that the device runs (some popular ones include iOS, Android)

Now that you know what tracking is, you can use your objectives and KPIs to define what metrics you'll be tracking. You'll then need to analyse these results, and take appropriate actions. Then the testing begins again!

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