

# 9

## Website Metrics and Analytics

The ability to systematically measure and evaluate website marketing outcomes is highly valued. For example in the two year period between 2015 to 2017 the average salary of a web analytics manager in the UK increased by 11.7% from £45,000 to £52,500 ([www.itjobswatch.co.uk](http://www.itjobswatch.co.uk)). Sometimes website development is not considered as part of the marketing function because the process of gathering information on website performance requires technical skills (Aloha Ward, 2017). However, digital marketers need to understand how to measure website performance and link these outcomes to marketing activity at each stage of the digital customer lifecycle.

### Attraction

Attraction is about getting the website to the attention of the user. A key metric is the page rank or the position of the content in search results. Search engines are programmes that match search terms to documents on the Internet. A search engine works by using a robot or spider to crawl through digital content and automatically index it very much like a library classifies books. When a search request is made a search engine selects the results to display on the search engine results page (SERP). The most popular search engine is Google which accounts for over 77% of the searches worldwide (Net Market Share, 2017); other search engines exist such as Yahoo and Bing. Ensuring that that a brand's website is listed in search results will succeed in gaining traffic. There is evidence to suggest a trend towards individuals preferring to enter search terms to locate a particular website rather than typing in the URL (Cabel, 2008).

Digital marketers should ensure that the brand website has visibility by being in the initial SERPS. When results are listed, consumers will only click on the highly ranked links. Studies show that over a third (37%) of searchers click through on links on the first page; this falls to just over a tenth on the second page. Internet users are becoming more skilled at online search. In 2012 Pew Internet research found that 91% of search engine users say they always or most of the time find the information that they are seeking when they use search engines, and 56% of searchers say they are very confident in their search abilities. Therefore people will not generally consider more than one page of search results.

The process of ensuring that a website has high visibility in the SERP is called Search Engine Marketing (SEM). SEM aims to ensure that a website has visibility and attracts appropriate visitors. A search engine ranks and scores documents in the index in terms of relevancy and recency of content, and the pages with the most relevant and recent are listed first on the SERP, in what are called the *organic* search results. SEO works since customers place greater trust in organic search results and are more likely to purchase from that brand (Malaga, 2009). The search engine will also display content that brands have paid to be displayed when specific search terms are entered. SEM involves pull and push media techniques (Table 9.1). Metrics and analytics measure the contribution of each of these routes in terms of costs for the quantity and quality of achieved visitors (Table 9.2).

**Table 9.1:** Comparison of pull and push media

Pull media	Push media
Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) designing a digital content so it is listed in the top results from a search engine as being the most recent and relevant to the searcher.	Pay-per-Click (PPC) or keyword advertising involves bidding to appear at in the top results. Payment is made when the ad is clicked.
	Paid placement or paid inclusion involves paying for an advertisement to appear in the search results. Payment is made when the ad is viewed.

**Table 9.2:** Key analytics: Attraction

Analytics	Calculation
Cost per visitor	Marketing expenses/visitors
Response rage	Responses/ total impressions
Cost per acquisition	Cost of campaign/ campaign respondents
Cost per click	Cost of campaign/ cost per response

## Search engines as pull media

Keywords describe the content of each web page so that the search engine can match the page with the search query, and content should be relevant to the keyword supplied. Each search engine has its own requirements for determining relevance and recency (Sen, 2005). This is called the search engine *algorithm*. Chaffey and Smith (2013) give the example of Google's search ranking algorithm which has around 200 factors or signals. These include both positive signals which boost ranking (for example, clearly relevant content) and negative signals which reduce position (for example, pages that have not been updated for some time).

Appearing in the organic results was more important when Google placed organic results in the main body of the page starting from the top left, and PPC results in a box on the right hand side of the SERP. Eye-tracking research by Nielsen (2006) shows that website visitors focus on the top left corner of a webpage and pay limited attention to the right hand side. However, in 2016, in order to enhance the display of results on mobile and tablet devices, Google changed the layout of the SERPS, so that there were fewer advertisements on each page, but that the PPC results were displayed at the top and bottom of each page of organic results. As there were fewer PPC opportunities on each page, the advertising costs increased, and this increased the importance of selecting an appropriate strategy.

Keywords are chosen by website managers to describe the website to the search engine. Keywords should reflect as accurately as possible the words that individuals use when looking for the goods and services of the organisation, e.g. 'handbag'. In addition, there are qualifiers which are words that can be used to form keyword phrases or keyphrases. (Figure 9.1). Keyphrases let brands fine tune the website placement in the SERPS, so that it reaches customers who are best placed to make use of services, for example including geographic qualifiers enables a brand to reach those in the geographic area. A feature of search engines is auto-complete, where the search engine suggests to the user a keyphrase after the first words have been input in order to improve the relevance of the results. If a website manager can ensure these keyphrases appear in the content of the website or are included in a PPC campaign, then the website will be highly ranked since search engines attribute more relevance to a match with a combination of keywords rather than a single word (Chaffey and Smith, 2013).