

Analytics in Action: Clicks and Content

By Seth Grimes, Alta Plana Corporation

For your online presence, Web + content analytics add up to business advantage.

Web analytics is great stuff – counting page views and clicks in order to trace and report online behaviors – but to meet enterprise goals, you'll need forms of analytics that take you beyond the simple insights you can get from clickstream data and Web-server log files. Whether your goal is to deliver great online experience to Web-site visitors, search-engine optimization, or to maximize the value of customer and market information, you will not be able to accomplish your task with Web analytics alone.

Consider two beyond-Web analytics challenges –

Challenge #1: Understand the *why* behind Web analytics' *what*.

Challenge #2: Profit from the full set of business-relevant information available.

These challenges can be met with business intelligence (BI) solutions that draw from the huge volume of “unstructured” text available online and within the enterprise. They are best met via *content analytics*.

Why content analytics? Because content analytics can make sense of the opinions and attitudes that motivate Web users. Content analytics gets at the *voice of the customer* (or voter, patient, or market) as expressed online in blogs, forum postings, reviews, and the like. Content analytics extracts business value from e-mail, surveys, contact-center conversations, and a range of other feedback sources, with links possible to systems that record sales, inquiries, and other transactions.

Myself, I've been a proponent of BI and semantic content analysis for years, but in recent discussions with my consulting client Open Text, it has become clear that renewed market education is needed. Business audiences will benefit by understanding Web analytics' limits and the advantages of semantically powered solutions such as Open Text's. (*Semantics* describes a set of search, information access, and data analysis

solutions that help you describe, categorize, and link data from diverse sources. Semantics enhances the usefulness and usability of online, social, and enterprise information.)

Let's take a closer look, at analytics, clicks, and content, at steps that will take you from measurement to insight.

BI Analytics: Not Just Simple Numbers

Analytics is the search for business insight in online, social, and enterprise data. It communicates business information in the form of numbers, tables, charts, and visualizations. We're interested both in simple numbers such as counts of Web-site visitors and page views and in computed key performance indicators (KPIs) derived from business metrics.

Data tables, charts, and dashboards allow the user (or reader) to contrast values for different variables – for instance, in a sales scenario, retail location, product, and date – and we additionally use widgets such as speedometers and fuel gauges to convey status relative to nominal or expected values. More elaborate visualizations help communicate concepts and relative values. Think of a word cloud where font size reflects how often a term appears in a document, and check out [Gapminder's animated world-development timelines](#). Visualizations like these excel at conveying complex information.

Users of Web analytics tools count visits to Web pages over time, collecting information such as browser, page dwell time, referrer, geographic location (as inferred from the IP address), and URL parameters. They graph and analyze the numbers, looking at trends, in order to optimize, for instance, loyalty (repeat visits), content stickiness (the amount of time people spend on a page/site), and content effectiveness. To be effective on the Web, you have to have happy, satisfied site visitors, who will act on their site visits: They'll buy something on your site (if an online commerce site), e-mail or tweet your articles (if you're an online publisher), or participate in your forums. Call these outcomes "conversion."

From Numbers to Text

That's Web analytics. Content analytics allow users – humans or machines – to collect very different information from and about those same Web pages for complementary purposes. In particular, content analytics parses and interprets the Web – and also social and enterprise content – primarily text but also other forms of "unstructured" information such as images, audio, and video. So content analytics both enriches Web analyses and derives similar insights from a host of other, off-line sources.

A simple content analysis will raise keywords and themes that can and should be associated with your online content, and ways to organize your content such as topic pages, that will make your content findable: Search Engine Optimization (SEO). More sophisticated Content Analytics, utilizing natural-language processing (NLP), will provide even more effective content optimization, for both SEO findability and visitor satisfaction.

How? For instance, by identifying important entities (such as people, companies, and places), topics, and themes in content and then using that information a) to seed search-engine indexes; b) to populate search facets, which are basic categories that site visitors can use to quickly focus on products and information of interest; and c) as the basis for recommendations and similarity search, features that engage an audience.

Content Analytics boosts visitor satisfaction, and therefore the effectiveness that leads to higher conversion rates, turning visitors into buyers. It increases stickiness and promotes loyalty.

Clearly, these two forms of Analytics, Web Analytics and Content Analytics, can operate hand-in-hand to create Smart Content, profitable content.

About the author

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