



By Judith Lamont, *KMWorld* senior writer

Web analytics: insights into the customer journey

It's no surprise that in this age of digital transformation and e-commerce, web analytics would be considered essential for any business. Understanding online behavior is one of the keys to fulfilling the potential of the digital age. The online versus in-store market is at an inflection point; in June 2016, the annual United Parcel Service (UPS, ups.com) Pulse of the Online Shopper survey found that online purchases of non-grocery items exceeded in-store purchases although just barely (51 percent to 49 percent). Research firm MarketsAndMarkets (marketsandmarkets.com) predicts total worldwide sales of over \$3 billion for web analytics software solutions, including marketing automation, search engine tracking, heat map analytics and behavior-based targeting.

Web analytics are provided by many different categories of software products, including point solutions that serve only that function, to marketing automation systems that also deliver content, to web content management (WCM) systems that store and deliver content. Most companies that have made a commitment to going digital are likely to use more than one tool for that purpose, which is a good route to take. Each type of product has different strengths and provides different insights. One pitfall, however, is that organizations end up with a lot of data but struggle to interpret it.

Mapping customer behavior

Capturing the customer behavior that drives the data adds a critical layer of insight and understanding. Visualizations are one way to present that complex

information in an understandable and actionable way. Clicktale (clicktale.com) heatmaps, for instance, show exactly which parts of the screen their customers are focusing on. Analysts can then see which areas of the customer journey are progressing quickly and where customers are struggling. "We take data that is hard to capture and digest, and package it in a way that is easy to understand and use," says Yael Tolub, VP of marketing at Clicktale.

The North Face (northface.com), a division VF Corporation (vfc.com), offers apparel and equipment to climbers, hikers, explorers and other athletes through sporting goods retailers, outdoor specialty retail chains, snow sport retailers and others. The company wanted to find out why many visitors were arriving at checkout but not purchasing. Its web

THE POWER OF ONLINE STATISTICS

Statistics such as A/B testing, in which outcomes are compared for two different marketing options, present some special challenges for web analytics because of their real-time nature. Traditional statistical analyses work with a fixed set of data and a stated confidence level that an effect is real and not happening by chance. When data is coming in constantly and being analyzed in real time, the results may go above or below statistical significance as time goes by. Therefore it is difficult to say for sure whether an effect has been achieved.

A company wanting to determine the impact of different content strategies on conversion can estimate the sample size required for a statistically significant result given data about the current (baseline) conversion rate and the expected or hoped-for lift. That approach, however, may require a large sample size to detect a small

effect. In addition, if the users are trying to detect a large effect, statistical significance may not be reached, so smaller but relevant effects from the experiment may be overlooked. Another pitfall is testing for multiple effects on the same sample. That action can produce a false positive because the likelihood of finding an effect from a set of tests increases when multiple variations are tested simultaneously.

Optimizely (optimizely.com), which offers an experimentation platform, uses a technique called sequential sampling. Powered by Optimizely's statistics engine, it provides real-time results without requiring setting a sample size or level of effect in advance. Statistical significance increases as more data is collected. Another technique used by the Optimizely platform corrects for the number of goals and variations being tested, reducing the likelihood of false positives.

Source: *A Practical Guide to Statistics for Online Experiments*, provided by Optimizely

analytics software indicated how many customers were visiting the page, but not why the visitors failed to take the last step to purchase.

Using Clicktale's Mouse-Move and Mouse-Click heatmaps, North Face marketers drilled down to look at individual session recordings. They discovered that potential buyers were being distracted by a promotional banner for a rewards program that had been placed above the checkout button. Intended to engage visitors, the banner was having the opposite effect—visitors were getting distracted by the banner and not getting to checkout. The company then ran an A/B test on two different positions of the banner relative to the checkout button—one in the original position and one with the checkout button above the banner. With the checkout button above the banner, there was a 21 percent increase in the click-through rate to checkout. Conversion rates increased from 45 percent to 63 percent, a notable gain.

The focus of Clicktale is to explain why certain online behaviors are occurring. "Even in cases where a company has an extensive array of analytics tools," Tolub says, "Clicktale provides unique insights."

One company using an ecosystem of analytics is B&Q (diy.com), a large home improvement retailer in Europe. The quality of the online customer experience is critical, because 75 percent of customers do their research on the B&Q

website or mobile site before making a purchase. Using Adobe (adobe.com) Analytics, B&Q detected a high dropoff rate during the checkout process, but B&Q did not know why that was occurring. Clicktale identified several issues and helped prioritize them by calculating the revenue that was being lost because of each one. Within a few months, B&Q resolved four of the issues, cutting aban-

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donment rates and increasing revenue. Revenue in one product category at B&Q increased by 110 percent as a result of higher conversion rates and a higher average order value.

"Most companies now understand that they need to constantly analyze, test and optimize," Tolub says. "What is a great design today might not be as powerful tomorrow. Behavioral analytics coupled with web analytics help accelerate the feedback loop by providing precise

information on the visitor-site interaction and facilitate this evolution."

Marketing automation

Marketing automation brings together input from web analytics, social, mobile and email to form a composite picture of the customer, with additional information from purchase history when available. "By centralizing this interaction process, marketing automation creates a conversation with the customer," says Brian Glover, principal product marketing manager for Marketo (marketo.com). "It measures and manages the communications as customers move through the buyer journey and beyond the purchase stage."

Nokia (nokia.com) is using Marketo to obtain statistics on whether a customer has visited the website, downloaded a white paper or attended a webinar in order to assess customer engagement and determine what content would be appropriate to provide the customer at the next stage. The company reports that it can better understand the customer needs, provide the right content and nurture the customer through the sales process using Marketo's marketing analytics.

Roche Diagnostics (rochediagnostics.com), which offers medical products and services for detection, diagnosis and treatment of a wide range of diseases, also uses Marketo

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to nurture customers. Because of the nature of its products, Roche's sales cycle is long and complex; Marketo monitors customers' progress and provides the appropriate content. Web analytics presents insights about who is coming to the site and what information they are viewing. The company is in the process of developing and aligning several personas throughout four business units in Roche to provide consistent experiences and a content map that designates certain information to be delivered at different points along the customer journey.

One of Marketo's new products, Marketo Account-Based Marketing, was developed to support account-based marketing (ABM). The product allows marketers to engage selected accounts with personalized content and then measure the impact. "This product allows companies to focus on the accounts that matter the most to them," says Glover. "The account list may be input from the sales department, which gives specific names, or a segmented approach like size or industry. The marketing department can then match up this information with what they know from the marketing automation system." ABM is not a new strategy, but is difficult to scale without software that helps direct the process and tracks what is going on.

Marketo uses three major classes of analytics that cut across multiple marketing channels. Those products help marketers, who are often overwhelmed with massive amounts of data, sort out the impact of various types of input. The first one is buyer journey analytics, which provides an understanding of

to pipeline and revenue. "This information helps marketing departments show the impact of their efforts, which changes the conversation with sales and executives," Glover says.

Analytics from customer experience platforms

Customer experience management (CEM) platforms and web content management (WCM) systems now come with built-in web analytics. Sitecore (sitecore.net), for example, provides a variety of metrics, including clickstream analysis and the ability to do A/B testing.

"Sitecore provides marketing-aware clickstream analysis—users can see which

individual customer view in the Experience Profile and in aggregate using Experience Analytics. Content delivery is automated based on customer behavior and becomes progressively more personalized over time.

One Sitecore customer, Danone-Nutrucia (danonenutricia.com.au), a European manufacturer of formula, milk and baby food, embarked on a content-led personalization program called Mother's Journey. The company identified important moments in a mother's experience throughout her pregnancy. By combining detailed consumer insight from its Sitecore Experience Database with a thorough understanding of the customer journey,

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interactions are leading to the marketing goals," says Ryan Donovan, SVP of product management at Sitecore. "Our Sitecore Path Analyzer indicates to brands what pathways within the site are most effective and least effective, with the ultimate goal of a purchase or repeat visit. It also shows where that brand loses the customer on the journey through the site and whether customers who receive personalized content are converting to a sale at a higher rate."

Once companies start using analytics such as these, the results are quite compelling. "Organizations can see outcomes more clearly when they look at a graphic representation of a funnel chart," says Donovan. "They can see where people are falling off versus those going through to complete the purchase."

Having analytics as an integrated

Danone-Nutrucia is now able to deliver personalized content that creates and nurtures customer relationships throughout the mother's pregnancy. That online relationship has contributed substantially to an increase in average monthly repurchase growth for the company.

The biggest mistake that organizations make in web analytics, according to Donovan, is that they are not connecting marketing analytics to content. "If they just look at clickstream data, they are not completing the process. Sometimes they're afraid to experiment with different scenarios," he says. Google (google.com) Analytics, a widely used free analytics tool, needs a custom taxonomy and content must be tagged to connect content to analytics. "On the Sitecore Experience Platform, the connection to content is a part of the product from day one," Donovan adds.

A complicating factor not solved by software solutions is the competition from different stakeholders for scarce screen space. "The analytics can discover gaps, overlaps or conflicts in the user experience," says Donovan, "but digital marketers, product developers and others all have different agendas and may have competing ideas about how to resolve the issue. Roles and responsibilities must be clarified, along with a decision about who has the final say for each situation. Only then can the promise of truly personalized and contextualized customer experiences come to life." ■

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where people are, how quickly they are moving through the sales process and where they are getting stuck.

The second is analytics for personalization, which uses data from a variety of integrated analytics. "We can use predictive analytics and machine learning to recommend content, including videos and white papers," says Glover. "Most companies have tons of valuable content that is collecting virtual dust, and it could be used for customer engagement."

The third class of analytics is business impact, which helps marketers tie them

component of the CEM means that they work right out of the box, without integration issues. CEMs also can be used to store content from other sources, including incoming emails, online and offline transactions and social media posts, in a single data set. That approach delivers a personalized experience to the consumer in real time and provides a more holistic view of the data.

The Sitecore Experience Database (xDB) provides contextual information about customers regardless of channel, which is then presented in a one-to-one

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