

ONLINE EVALUATION METHOD FOR ASSESSING THE VARIATION OF THE NUMBER OF TOURISTS INTERESTED IN CAR RENTAL

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Abstract: *The paper presents a method for assessing the variation in the number of tourists interested in Romanian car rental services during the year. The results were obtained using Google Analytics and the website monitored with this tool was www.eurocars.ro. The website was optimized for foreign tourists. Also in the paper several aspects about working with the Google Analytics tool are revealed.*

Key words: *Google, analytics, car, rental, tourism.*

1. Introduction

The measurement is very important in any economical activity. In tourism the measurement is also very important. Without systems destined to measure the profile and the interest of tourists in specific services it's difficult to improve performance and to adjust to the ever changing market conditions. As measuring systems, websites have a major role in studying the site visitors. In the past we used to talk about "hits" on a website. A problem, but this meant practically nothing. Due to their rapid development occurring up to the present day it's amazing what a good web analytics system can achieve. A very important measuring system is Google Analytics. This system can be successfully used for most small to medium sized organizations with excellent results.

2. Google Analytics as a Tourism Measuring Tool

Unlike many other website traffic analysis tools, Google Analytics (GA) is destined to

be a resource for marketers rather than for webmasters. Google Analytics tracks visitor information from all referrers including search engines, advertisements, e-mail marketing and other websites.

Website owners can use Google Analytics' integration with Google AdWords to review online advertising campaigns by tracking entrance pages and goals. User-defined goals include views of specific pages or downloading particular files. With over 80 available reports, Google Analytics provides marketers with information about how to optimize campaigns including which advertisements are performing well and which are not.

To use Google Analytics, each website must have its own account ID, which can be acquired at no cost through a simple registration process. Google Analytics works through the use of a first party cookie and small snippet of JavaScript code, known as a page tag, on every website page. The JavaScript code is provided by Google at the end of the website registration.

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The implementation of this Google Analytics Tracking Code (GATC) captures anonymous visitor data and sends it, along with the account ID, to Google collection servers for processing. Data processing typically occurs on an hourly basis, but can be 3-4 hours behind. Therefore, Google Analytics is better used for tracking trends over long periods of time than reporting about current activity.

Google Analytics' user interface is a dashboard containing many different views of visitor data collected for a particular website (see Figure 1).



Fig. 1. *Google Analytics dashboard*

Users have the ability to customize various aspects of the dashboard for quick access to information that is most important to them. The dashboard allows drilling-down in each view to obtain additional, more specific information. For example, the Map Overlay view allows drilling-down in each individual country (see Figure 1).

Content Overview displays information about individual pages on a website. General information on this view includes drill-downs for top content by page hits, navigation information, landing page analysis and click patterns. By clicking on the link for any specific page, the same drill-down information is available, but limited to only that particular web page. Visitors Overview provides data about site guests, including number of visits during a specified date range, absolutely unique visitors, page views, average page views, time spent on the site, bounce rate and new visits. Additional

information includes web browsers used to access the site and the visitor's connection speed. Information about language, network locations, visitor operating system, screen colours, screen resolutions, java support and Flash versions is also available. Traffic Sources displays data about how visitors access the website and which keywords were used in search engines to find the site. Detailed drill-downs are available for the sources and keywords. In addition to standard data views, Google Analytics now offers a beta version of Custom Reporting. In this module, users can design custom reports to display information they wish to analyze or re-format existing reports to include additional data. One shortfall of this module is the difficulty in customizing visitor location data. Even though Google Analytics collects IP address information about visitors, Google's privacy policy prevents the company from making that information available to Analytics' users. Therefore, visitor IP addresses are not available for custom querying of location databases [2].

3. Car Rental as a Form of Tourism

Car rental is an important tourism branch. For example, in California the car rental industry budget was 39.8 million \$ and an anticipated total of \$ 240 million until 2013.

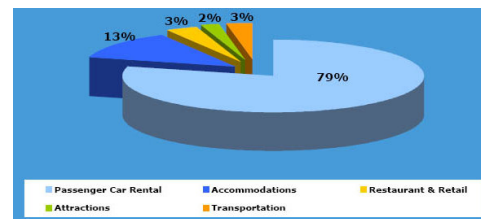


Fig. 2. *Contributions of tourism forms to the tourism budget in California* [3]

The car rental services consist in renting automobiles for short periods of time (ranging from a few hours to a few weeks) for a fee. It is an elaborate form of a rental

shop, organized in numerous local branches, primarily located near airports or busy city areas and often complemented by a website allowing online reservations. There are also third party websites (such as online travel agencies) which compare quotes from the major car rental agencies. Car rental agencies primarily serve people who have a car that is temporarily out of reach or out of service, for example travellers who are out of town, business persons etc.

Because of the variety of sizes of their vehicles, car rental agencies may also renting vans or trucks, and in certain markets other types of vehicles such as motorcycles or scooters may also be offered [1].

4. Results Obtained for Car Rental Activity

In car rental business there are two periods: high-season and low-season. The high-season begins in March and lasts until the end of September. The results will show the variation of tourists throughout these periods obtained with Google Analytics tool. A module of this tool was implemented on the website: www.eurocars.ro.

In Table 1 the statistics regarding the website visitors interested in car rental services between March 1st 2008 and March 1st 2009 is presented as well as the number of visitors that became clients for this type of service.

Statistics of car rental activity between 2008 - 2009

Table 1

Rental period	Website Visits	Goal Conversion rate	Clients for car rental
Mar 1 st , 2008 - Mar 31 st , 2008	8227	1.02%	83
Apr 1 st , 2008 - Apr 30 th , 2008	9986	1.97%	197
May 1 st , 2008 - May 31 st , 2008	10104	2.52%	255
Jun 1 st , 2008 - Jun 30 th	10489	2.73%	286
Jul 1 st , 2008 - Jul 31 st , 2008	12029	3.48%	419
Aug 1 st , 2008 - Aug 31 st , 2008	10622	3.17%	337
Sep 1 st , 2008 - Sep 30 th , 2008	7614	3.05%	232
Oct 1 st , 2008 - Oct 31 st , 2008	6666	2.55%	170
Nov 1 st , 2008 - Nov 30 th , 2008	5716	1.85%	106
Dec 1 st , 2008 - Dec 31 st , 2008	6184	1.91%	118
Jan 1 st , 2009 - Jan 31 st , 2009	6652	1.65%	110
Feb 1 st , 2009 - Feb 28 th , 2009	6800	1.76%	120

The fraction from the total number of visitors that become clients for the car rental services represents the goal conversion rate.

The number of visitors interested in car rental services that accessed the www.eurocars.ro website between March 1st 2008 and March 1st 2009 is presented in Figure 3.

The results presented in the graph in Figure 3 reflect an increase of the number of visitors during high-season (from March to September). In low-season, from November until the end of February, the number of clients decreased.

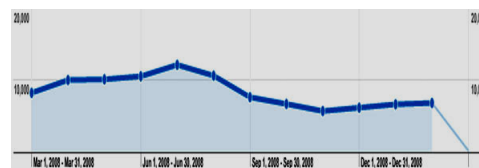


Fig. 3. *The car rental visitors number variation between March 1st 2008 and March 1st 2009*

In the high-season and low-season there are variations in the number of visitors. For example in the month of April the number

of visitors increased due to Easter and in the month of December the increase was determined by Christmas and New Years Eve.

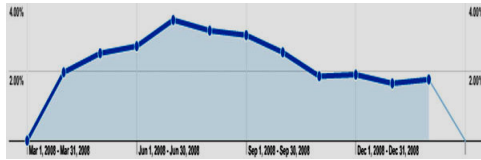


Fig. 4. *The goal conversion rate in the period March 1st 2008 to March 1st 2009*

The variation in the number of clients can be seen in Figure 4. This figure shows the goal rate in the period March 1st 2008 to March 1st 2009. The total number of visitors in this period was of 101.089. The average goal conversion rate was 2.42%. The number of clients that booked the cars using the website www.eurocars.ro during the specified period was of 2349.

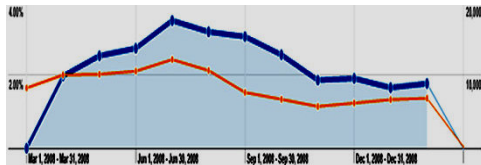


Fig. 5. *Comparison between the number of visitors and goal conversion rate*

A comparative graph showing the variation number of www.eurocars.ro website visitors and conversion rate variation from March 1st 2008 to March 1st 2009 is presented in Figure 5.

5. Conclusions and Future Work

The Google Analytics is a very important tool for assessing a large amount of information about people interested in a specific service. Goals are useful because they enable both the measure of a site's success and failure when people start a funnel and don't complete it. But they also enable the segmentation of success and in Google Analytics. For example, all the Traffic Sources reports have tabs that enable anyone to look at Traffic Source by goal achievement. Obtaining the information about the trend of clients' needs is vital for the success of a business. One of the greatest advantages of online instruments is the flexibility in providing data about the clients' requests. The website can be modified in order to fulfil these requests and the results of changes can be obtained again by using Google Analytics.

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