Recommendations for Gittip: Web Traffic Analytics

An analysis for using market research to monitor current traffic and future campaigns

Prepared for
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Chad Whitacre
Founder of Gittip
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Dear Mr. Whitacre,

In response to the hire @abnor thread on Github, proposing my position as Google Analysics Manager and asking for more research on what Google Analytics can do for Gittip, here is a report that explains the positive potential for utilizing traffic analysis through two different companies, Google analysis and Piwik analysis. As a part of the Marketing Board, I can say with confidence that a technical marketing approach such as traffic Analysis will tremendously help to focus the development of Gittip into a service that reaches multiple demographics.

This report covers the different facets of traffic analysis, including different ways to track web page traffic in addition to monitoring the sources that bring visitors to Gittip. It also mentions the potential to track keyword searches and the use of other future APIs as Gittip's interface develops.

I appreciate the interest in monitoring Gittip's traffic flow and the acknowledgement of traffic analysis as a powerful tool. I look forward to working together on analysis project for diversity.

Sincerely,

Lyndy Palmer
Gittip Marketing Board

INTRO TO TRAFFIC ANALYTICS .

Traffic analytics tools such as Google Analytics and Piwik Analytics are ways to measure interest in a given website. Although Gittip is still in its infancy and requires more technical and aesthetic structure to be available and attractive to a diverse audience, utilizing traffic analytics tools is a powerful way to measure Gittp's current demographics in addition to highlighting traffic problems areas throughout the site.

ANALYTICS TOOLS AND FUNCTIONS .

Web Traffic Analysis is the process of examining data for patterns in visitor demographics and behavior.

There are two ways that traffic analytics are commonly used: on-site and off-site. On-site analytics are used to show the patterns of traffic on the website, such as the average time visitors spend on a website. Off-site analytics will show the change in traffic after a given event, such as a live advertisement.

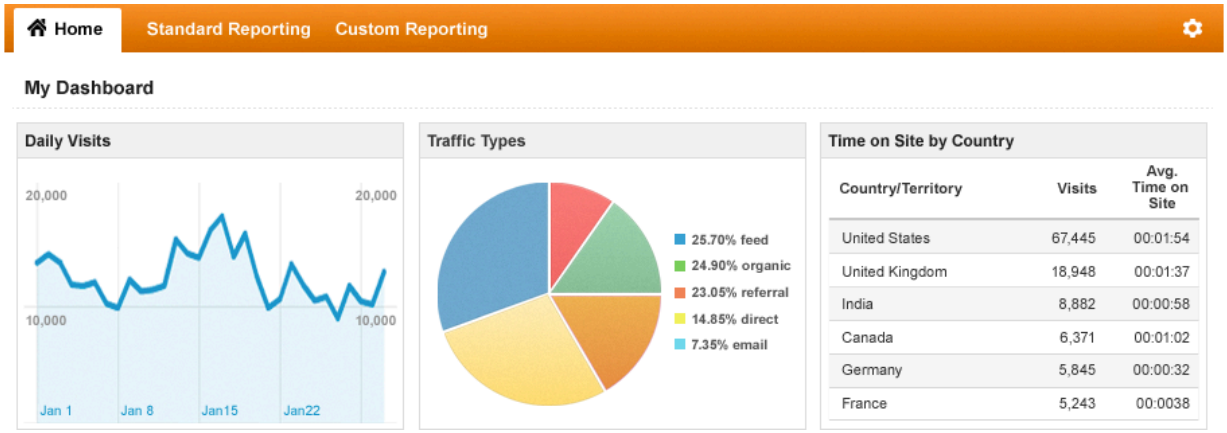
Using the data from traffic analytics one can find out many different things about the individuals who frequent a given website.

Demographics: Data can tell alot about demographics, such as the device or browser a visitor is using, the geolocation of their IP address, the time of day they visited, and the keywords and search engines they used to find the site.

Behavior: Data can also tell about behavior, such as the different websites that a visitor used to get to a given website, or the click path they had while browsing the site, and the amount of time they spend browsing. Traffic analytics commonly also feature the ability to view live traffic on a given website.

GOOGLE VS PIWIK ANALYTICS .

Google Analytics is the most popular analytics tool currently because many people use the Google search engine and advertising. Companies who use Google Analytics pull data from those sources (Google). *Preview of Google Analytics dashboard.*



Piwik Analytics has become popular among opensource programmers, especially because of the anonymity of data usage. (Many don't want Google to own their company information.) Piwik also uses data from all search engines and isn't restrained to just Google. It is also praised for its simple interface and language. (TechDivaMedia). *Preview of Piwik dashboard.*

ANALYTICS TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS .

Analytics tools use a combination of log files and cookies. Traffic analytics used to only take data from server hits, that is, the counter that kept record of file requests from browsers. Today JavaScript tags are often used to record more in depth behavior, such as tracking clicks and other input from a visitor.

ANALYTICS DESIRED OUTCOMES .

The appeal of analytics tools are that they make large amounts of sterile data very interactive and comprehensive. A list of IP addresses is useless, but a graphical representation of the same thing can tell a great deal about the kind of visitors a website attracts. Demographic information is important to a website because it gives clues to what the audience wants.

Analytics tools reveal positive and negative aspects of a given website. Often changes in data will inspire changes to the website, such as a redesign or new functions. Changes should be done to attract and encourage larger audiences to spend more time on the website.

Hopefully the website will become friendlier, that is, easier to use by a large audience. A friendly website is sticky and has a low bounce rate for visitors. In other words friendly websites are appealing.

While some websites are happy just to get visitors, other websites want visitors to become users, a term called conversion rate. Highly interactive websites, those which have comment submission boxes, search engines, downloadable content, etc. are concerned with their conversion rate and use traffic analytics to gauge interactivity.

For example a commerce website will use analytics tools to track activity on their checkout process. If they find that the majority of users never complete their checkout process, they can take steps to find the issue and fix the problem, often just making the process easier.

Websites that buy advertisements or go to conventions to raise their visibility will want to know that their efforts did not go to waste. Analytics tools can keep track by tagging online advertisements or monitoring traffic flow over certain periods of time. An advertisement with lots of clicks or a dramatic increase in traffic ensures a positive result.

Websites that network with other websites will also want to gauge the effectiveness of their relationships. Analytics tools can help keep track of a given website's popularity (buzz) by revealing what websites talk about or link to them.

For example, an opensource website will be friends with other opensource websites. When a company website goes to a meeting with other companies who liked them, they will go home and brag (or blog) on their own website. Traffic analytics tracks these entries and links.

ANALYTICS AND GITTIP .

Traffic analytics tools are powerful for growing companies and their websites. It offers a tremendous amount of opportunity to reveal important patterns in their audience. Gittip is getting to the point where it is gathering more users than it knows what to do with, and without analytics tools it is losing out on collecting useful data. How could Gittip utilize traffic analytics tools?

- First and foremost analytics tools can be customized. We could track bounce and conversion rates, pageviews and session lengths, and tag a bunch of other API's to gauge popularity.

- Second, with the data collected just from basic webpage counters, we could find out which pages are the most popular, and which aren't. We can then brainstorm ways to make pages more sticky, especially those that are important to using Gittip, such as bank information pages.

- Third, with the information we get about popular pages we can encourage more appropriate campaigns to gain more traffic. For example, if we find that most popular profile pages are programmers, yet one popular profile page is outside of programming, we could interview the individual to find out why they are so popular, and encourage them to reach out to others like them, using their own successes despite the odds as proof for the importance of diversity.

- Fourth, looking through search engine keywords that people used to find us, we can expand our keyword breadth and include more of those keywords in our site description pages. We could also utilize those keywords in our own search engine, when we create it.

- Fifth, we could finally put some concrete adjectives on the demographics that are attracted to our site, and tailor it accordingly.

- And finally, we could use analytics tools to organize our current data about our site, instead of using static images and text to represent our progress.

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