Social Media Ad Metrics Definitions

Released May 2009

These Definitions have been developed by the IAB User-Generated Content & Social Media Committee.

About the IAB's User-Generated Content & Social Media Committee:
The User-Generated Content & Social Media Committee of the IAB is comprised of over 150 member companies dedicated to helping develop and expand the user-generated content space as a viable advertising platform. The committee works to educate marketers and agencies on the strength of user-generated content & social media as a marketing vehicle. A full list of Committee member companies can be found at:
http://www.iab.net/member_center/councils_committees_working_groups/committees/user_generated_content_social_media_committee

This document can be found on the IAB Web site at:
http://www.iab.net/ugc_metrics_definitions

IAB Contact Information:
Ryan Walker
Manager of Industry Services, IAB
212-380-4731
ryan@iab.net

Table of Contents

Introduction

This document specifies standard definitions for Social Media Metrics. With the rapid growth seen in the Social Media space in recent years, many publishers and vendors are offering supplemental performance metrics to their clients as additional ways of gauging ad effectiveness. This document defines these supplemental metrics in more detail in an effort to stimulate growth by making the reporting of metrics for agencies and advertisers across multiple media partners more consistent. The IAB hopes that all players in the Social Media space will coalesce around these metrics to encourage growth through consistency.

Social media speaks to a new way of understanding how individual users are interacting with branded content via online publishers, social networks, blogs, and applications. Before the proliferation of social media, the primary way for users to receive advertiser information was one-way. Social Media has changed the paradigm of how people consume online media.

The most profound difference is that Social Media has added a participatory element where an individual not only receives information but has the ability to take part in the creation and distribution of content. Furthermore, social media tools have enabled a dialogue and discovery around this content. It is the combination of these unique and appealing aspects that defines the true value of social media.

Value is derived not only from the primary distribution of branded content but also the additional interactions that result as users share, participate with, and propagate advertising content. In the end, social media adds another layer of value through its ability to engage users and create additional reach.

The current Social Media landscape can be broken into three distinct categories:

- Social Media Sites
- Blogs
- Widgets & Social Media Applications

This document first defines each of the categories, and then defines the supplemental metrics specific to each.

Category Overview

<u>Social Media Sites</u>

Social Media sites are characterized by the inherent functionality that facilitates the sharing of information between users within a defined network. The nature of Social Media allows for the initiation of conversation by either party, a key differentiator from established broadcast channels.

The size of the network is primarily a reflection of the active participation of the audience, as consumer-generated media represents that vast majority of all content. For consumers the true value of a network is measured by the frequency of engagement of the participants. For marketers, endorsement by consumers in the form of friending/following/subscribing validates their efforts and activates a viral distribution of their brand across channels.

<u>Blogs</u>

A blog, short for weblog, is a type of Web site used by individuals, groups or business entities to publish opinions and commentary on various topics. Content can be focused on very niche topics or can cover current events, popular themes, or even take the shape of a personal diary. Blog posts are listed in reverse chronological order and also allow for comments by readers. Posts can be in the form of text, image, video, or rich-media formats. In addition, blogging platforms allow for rapid syndication of content to interested audiences using opt-in protocols such as Really Simple Syndication (RSS).

For advertisers, blogs offer another interactive channel to reach engaged and enthusiastic consumers. Additionally, because of their conversational nature and affinity with readers, blogs can provide media planners with additional insight about consumer behavior and intent. With blogs, it is possible to map psychographic elements of engagement to traditional consumer demographic profiles.

Ad campaigns can target a single blog or multiple blogs by category using traditional interactive reach and audience metrics. However, additional targeting value can also be derived by mapping campaigns to blogs engaged in common "conversations" through the form of shared links, referencing each-other's content. The social connection of publisher-to-publisher relationships through these content links aggregates engaged consumers into a desirable and topic-engaged audience. The ability to aggregate audiences by topic is dynamic, following the dialogue consumers are having. Following these "conversations", an advertiser or brand evangelist is able to tailor creative to incorporate the messages, language, and tone audiences are using at the current moment and effectively speak directly to them, rather than building creative which is solely based on statistical reach and audience metrics.

Widgets & Social Media Applications

Web applications are software programs designed to work on one or more platforms. The term "Application" is most commonly used to describe a platform-specific program, such as a Facebook or MySpace application, which can tap into the sharing functionality or data available on a particular social network. This data includes such things as a user's friends or location. Applications work only on the platform for which they are designed. The key difference between a widget and an application is portability. Widgets are applications that can function on any site that accepts external content, including social networks, blog platforms, start pages (i.e. MyYahoo) desktop platforms or personal Web pages. Widgets can be built to function differently on each platform, delivering varying degrees of integration with a social network, from accessing and using social data to not interacting with the platform at all. Social applications encourage connectivity, self-expression or collaboration, often through games, productivity tools or interactive content.

There are two primary models for application advertising:

- **Sponsorship**, where an advertiser may collaborate with developers or intermediary parties to promote products/services directly on the application via IAB standard banner ads or integrated product or logo placement within an existing popular application.

- **Dedicated brand application**, where the advertiser can create or work with a developer to create a unique application that is built specifically to deliver on a brand objective.

    Common categories include but are not limited to:

– Alerts	– Messaging
– Business	– Mobile
– Chat	– Money
– Classified	– Music
– Competitions	– Pets
– Dating	– Photos
– Education	– Politics
– Events	– Quizzes
– Fashion	– Sports
– File Sharing	– Travel
– Food and Drink	– Utility
– Games	– Video
– Fun	

Reporting Metrics

General Social Media Metrics

It is important to note that web publishers that are not social networks themselves also host and measure social activity. Comments are the most common "social" activity on more traditional Web sites as well as blogs.

With the "opening up" of social networks and other platforms like Facebook Connect, MySpaceID, Twitter, and the availability of protocols such as OpenID and oAuth, to name just a few, Web publishers are now able to build an even richer site experience by incorporating social features. These features include accessing user and friend data to customize the user's experience and publishing user activity back to newsfeeds on social networks. As such, the social metrics in this document are applicable to more traditional Web publishers as well as what are currently considered dedicated "social media" sites.

- Unique Visitors
    - Unique individual or browser which has accessed a site or application and has been served unique content and/or ads such as e-mail, newsletters, interstitials or pop-under ads. Unique visitors can be identified by user registration, cookies, or third-party measurement like ComScore or Nielsen. Reported unique visitors should filter out bots. See iab.net for the audience reach measurement guidelines

- Cost per unique visitor
    - Total cost of the placement or application, divided by the number of unique visitors.

- Page Views

    - When the page is actually seen by the user. Some platforms, like Facebook cache preview images for applications, which can mean that page views are not counted until a user clicks through to an application canvas page.

- Visits (specific to UGC/Social Media)
    - A single continuous set of activity attributable to a cookied browser or user (if registration-based or a panel participant) resulting in one or more pulled text and/or graphics downloads from a site

- Return Visits
  - The average number of times a user returns to a site or application over a specific time period

- Interaction Rate
  - The proportion of users who interact with an ad or application. Some will be involuntary depending on where the ad or application is placed on screen, so it is highly dependent on placement.

- Time Spent (section, microsite, community)
  - The amount of elapsed time from the initiation of a visit to the last user activity associated with that visit. Time spent should represent the activity of a single cookied browser or user for a single access session to the web site application or other property. Most publishers consider a session continuous if and only if not broken by more than 30 minutes of inactivity.

- Video installs
  - Number of Video players that have been placed by a user onto their page. Also called embed, grab or post. A video player is a type of widget.

- Relevant actions taken (custom to widget or application creative execution) and cost per relevant action. Action examples:
  - Contest/Sweeps Entries
  - Coupons downloaded/redeemed
  - Games played
  - Videos viewed
  - Uploads (e.g. images, videos
  - Poll votes
  - Messages sent (e.g. Bulletins, Updates, Emails, Alerts)
  - Invites sent
  - Newsfeed items posted
  - Comments posted
  - Friends reached
  - Topics/Forums Created
  - Number of Group Members or Fans
  - Reposts ("Shares")

Blog Metrics

The social media metrics presented below are specific to blogs. However, as the Web and other sites become more social, these metrics have application value across other properties. Keep in mind these metrics are complementary to traditional user-advertisement interaction measures (i.e. impressions, clicks, and click-through-rate) and help drive further insight into media planning and campaign optimization.

There are two concepts that surface when targeting media plans to blogs: conversations and conversation phrases. A conversation is a collection of authors/sites and their audience linked by relevant content. A conversation phrase is a combination of keywords and keyword phrases used to associate an author/site, its content and audiences to a conversation.

Conversation Size

The following metrics will help advertisers understand the breadth and depth of discussion happening in the blogosphere about specific topics and in which consumers are engaged. These conversation metrics will guide media planners in their campaign planning and execution.

- Number of Conversation Relevant Sites
  - The count of sites in the conversation whose content contains conversation phrases from the client's Request for Proposal (RFP) or Insertion Order (IO).

- Number of Conversation Relevant Links
  - The count of links to (in-links) and from (out-links) content that contains conversation phrases from the client's RFP or IO across all sites identified for and/or supporting the campaign plan.

- Conversation Reach
  - The number of unique visitors (monthly) across sites in the conversation.

Site Relevance

The following metric can help an advertiser understand relevancy of the site and its content to the conversation phrases to which the media plan is targeted. By looking at the relevancy of the site's content compared to other sites, a media planner can better understand the impact of an advertisement on that site.

- Conversation Density of Conversation Relevant Posts
  - The percentage for which conversation phrases from the client's RFP or IO match Post content on the sites identified in the campaign media plan. Unlike SEO keyword density, this percentage is expressed across all posts on the site and not for a single page.

Author Credibility

The following metrics help an advertiser understand the credibility of the authors participating in the conversation. By looking at the length of time an author has been posting on a topic, the relevancy of the author's posts among his/her peers and the frequency of the author's posts, a media planner can better understand the impact of an advertisement on that author's site.

- Number of Conversation Relevant Posts on the Site
    - The number of posts on the site with content containing conversation phrases from the client's RFP or IO.

- Number of Links to Conversation Relevant Posts on the Site
    - The count of links to (in-links) and from (out-links) content containing conversation phrases from the client's RFP or IO for the site identified for and/or included in the campaign media plan.

- Earliest Post Date for Conversation Relevant Posts
    - The earliest post date for content containing conversation phrases from the client's RFP or IO for the site identified for and/or included in the campaign media plan.

- Latest Post Date for Conversation Relevant Posts
    - The most recent post date for content containing conversation phrases from the client's RFP or IO for the site identified for and/or included in the campaign media plan.

- Duration Between Earliest and Last Post Date for Conversation Relevant Posts
    - The time between a site's first posting and latest post for content containing conversation phrases from the client's RFP or IO for the site identified for and/or included in the campaign media plan.

Content Freshness and Relevance

The following metrics help an advertiser understand the freshness and relevance of the content on which their advertisement will appear. These metrics are important because media planners can better understand the impact of an advertisement across sites and their content within a campaign.

- Earliest Post Date for Conversation Relevant Posts
    - The earliest post date for content containing conversation phrases from the client's RFP or IO for the site identified for and/or included in the campaign media plan.

- Latest Post Date for Conversation Relevant Posts
  - The most recent post date for content containing conversation phrases from the client's RFP or IO for the site identified for and/or included in the campaign media plan.

- Mean-time Between Posts
  - The average (mean) time between posts for content containing conversation phrases from the client's RFP or IO for the site identified for and/or included in the campaign media plan.

Widget & Social Media Application Metrics

The following metrics apply specifically to widgets and social media applications. These supplementary metrics offer advertisers a greater insight into ROI for all widget and social media application campaigns.

- Installs - Applications
  - Total installations of application

- Active Users
  - Total users interacting with application over a specific time frame, usually day/week/month. Many applications have rapid growth but lose activity over time

- Audience Profile
  - User demographics from self reported profile information

- Unique User Reach
  - Percentage of users who have installed application among the total social media audience (or calculated as active application users per audience)

- Growth
  - Average number of users within a specific time frame

- Influence
  - Average number of friends among users who have installed application

- Application/Widget installs - User
  - Number of application or widgets installed by a user onto their profile page or other area. Also called embed, grab or post.

- Active users/Widgets in the wild
  - o Number of people regularly using an application at a given point in time
  - o Number of widgets on a user page at a given point in time

- Longevity/Lifecycle
  - o Average period of time for which an application or widget remains installed by a user