



Made to

Marketers want to evaluate their web sites and campaigns using more than just numbers of visitors. Robert Gray finds out how different metrics can help firms measure online effectiveness

sics. They want to know what delivers results and why. They want to measure the effectiveness of their online presence with metrics that provide true insight. They want to go beyond the clickthrough, to research and measure qualities such as branding, customer experience, security and online communities.

Because there are far fewer pureplay internet companies than there were two years ago, the nature of what companies want to measure has also changed. Most internet businesses today are connected with offline entities, and most online advertising campaigns are integrated with an offline element.

The internet is only one of many channels to market, so clients are increasingly looking to compare their web activities with what is going on in other parts of their business. They want metrics that will allow them to see, for example, how the email element of a direct marketing campaign compares with the direct mail element, or how their e-commerce arm compares with their high-street outlets.

The metrics established five years ago by the Joint Industry Committee for Web Standards allow companies to compare their online advertising results against those of others, but businesses need to integrate these metrics with their measurement of offline activity. They want to see how their whole online presence affects their bottom line.

According to interactive measurement specialist RedSheriff, companies are now merging different data sources. Its

Measurement of online marketing once amounted to little more than counting page impressions and adding up the number of people that clicked on a banner ad. Media owners and advertisers were thrilled the web enabled them to track consumer activity in this way.

Many still are, but now new media is no longer so new, they want more than the basics.

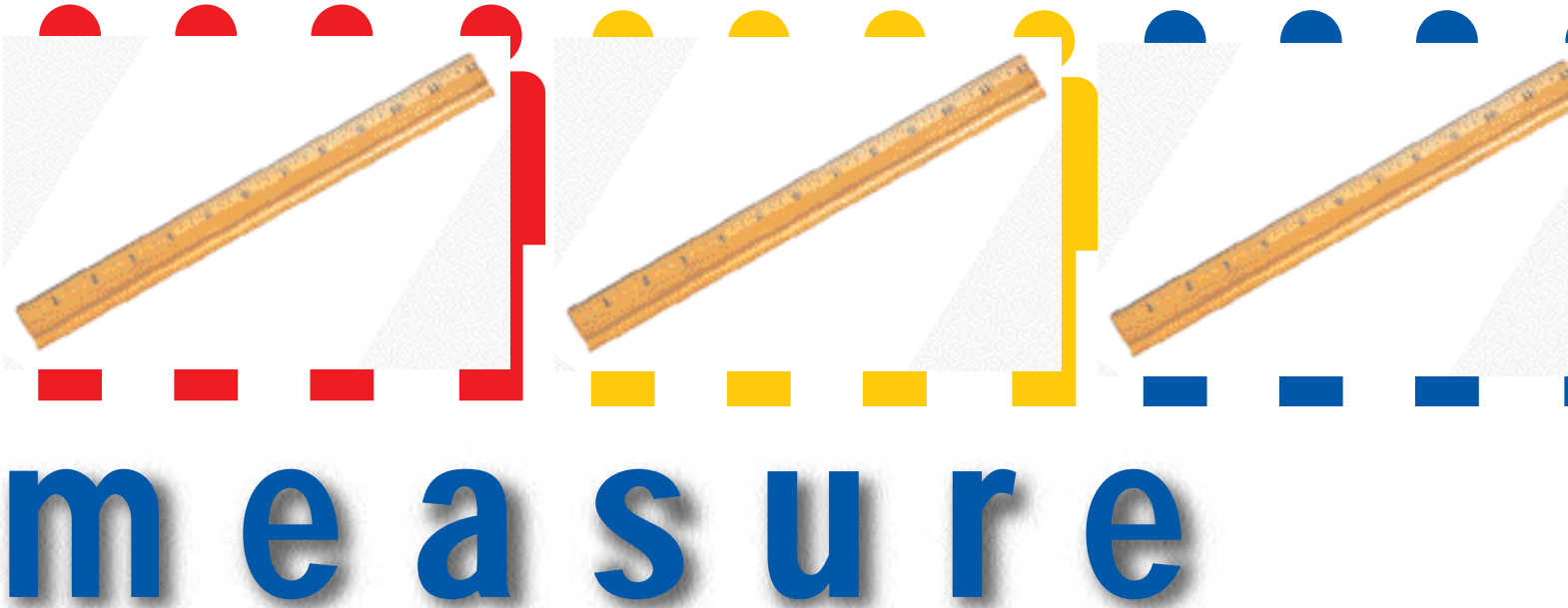
customers typically merge web traffic data with registered user data, cost of sale figures and revenue figures. "Everybody is thinking more about the customer," says RedSheriff European vice-president Martin Filz. "Behind the data is a customer who is letting you have information about themselves. You can't ignore this. It is the lifeblood of selling to them."

One of the most intriguing new measurement approaches is being developed by NetValue. It is merging with NetRatings and hitherto has been best known for its audience measurement system based on representative panels of internet users. That part of its business, though remaining key, has not grown as quickly as expected. So to produce new revenue streams, the firm has introduced MegaPanels, which comprise 100,000 web users per country. In recent weeks, MegaPanels have gone live in Germany and France. The UK panel is expected to be complete in September. At the time of writing, NetValue claimed to have recruited about 80,000 participants.

MegaPanels are not intended to be fully representative of the online universe, but their scale means that NetValue will be able to offer clients options that were not previously available. Free anti-virus software is provided as an incentive to join. Once recruited, panel members have a 'meter' downloaded onto their computers that tracks their internet usage. They also agree to answer specific questions.

MegaPanels include both at-home and at-work users to generate the broadest possible picture of online behaviour. This active base of consumers will be measured continuously, so that they provide data for clients that may be used at any time for tailor-made measurement studies.

Measurement applied to the entire panel or sub-panels can provide insight about web users' online shopping behaviour, companies' market share or average customer spend. MegaPanels data can be combined with data from offline databases, such as those used by clients for their customer loyalty programmes. NetValue says this will make it possible to conduct studies comparing online and offline consumer behaviour, and to survey panellists about specific customer issues.



"The scale of a MegaPanel enables us to observe sub-samples that are bigger than anything there has been before," says Eric Mistou, NetValue's executive vice-president of sales and marketing. "We can cover lead generation, online conversion, customer service and customer relationship management programmes. We are asking people things, but at the same time tracking, so we can confirm what they tell us."

The value of a brand has always been hard to measure, tied up as it is with so many intangible factors, but it is becoming increasingly important as online companies, such as ISP Freeserve, come under growing pressure from advertisers to prove their worth as an advertising choice.

Clickthrough data remains paramount for some Freeserve advertisers, as their main campaign objective is to generate a direct response, but it is a far less relevant metric for those with branding objectives. To date, Freeserve has carried out brand studies for four of its major advertisers: Unilever, Renault, Lloyds TSB and Charcol. It has used three market research suppliers – IPSOS RSL, Virtual Surveys and Taylor Nelson Sofres – to conduct this research via pop-up surveys run before, during and after campaigns. Freeserve claims the research showed an uplift in awareness in each of the four cases, as well as a positive change in perception of the brand attributes that the advertiser was looking to emphasise.

"One of the challenges going forward will be finding ways to measure branding other than online pop-up questionnaires," says Freeserve's advertising sales director, Caroline Pathy. "There are only so many studies that we can conduct each year without annoying our users."

NetCrawling, the company behind LemonAd, which tracks online advertising, is in the process of launching Brand Pepper, a spidering product that aims to help customers quantify their total online marketing spend – including PR, sponsorship, advertising and web positioning information.

"Brand Pepper is designed to identify where a brand's press coverage is appearing, the impressions it generates and the context within which it is written. It will report all this within a

pre-defined competitive set," says Simon Bright, NetCrawling's UK managing director. "The corresponding total online advertising activity of these brands, their sponsorship take-up and web positioning is also captured."

A car brand such as BMW, for example, could use the product to identify its brand visibility in relation to its competitors using criteria associated with that market, such as value for money, reliability, environment, emissions, features and luxury.

A company is, of course, just as interested to know how its web site is contributing to its brand as it is in tracking the brand effect of its online advertising. Carlson Digital, part of Carlson Marketing Group, has applied some of its expertise in offline research into customers' feelings about brands to the online environment. It interviewed more than 4,000 people to determine what drives successful consumer brand engagement on the web in a project called Carlson Online Relationship Builder. Brand engagement was defined by loyalty, advocacy (telling others about the brand) and closeness.

What makes the Carlson Online Relationship Builder unique, claims Gill Hynes, head of Carlson Digital, is that it investigates the real relationship marketing factors that underpin whether an online presence will succeed or not. "Without the benefit >



NetValue: MegaPanels will have 100,000 users per country

Carat Interactive data shows clients where to place ads



Panel data has to be put in context. There are still accuracy issues, so you have to take the findings with a pinch of salt

Andrew Smith
Carat Interactive

Media planning and buying agency Carat uses data from NetValue's 8,000-strong UK audience panel to help it pick the most effective web sites for its clients to advertise on.

Carat counts clients including Abbey National, Coca-Cola, Disney, AOL and online bank cahoot.

The NetValue data is compared with the findings of BMRB Internet Monitor research to help Carat's

planners achieve a 'top-line understanding' of how the target audience for a particular campaign uses the internet. Carat also draws on its own data, gleaned from past campaigns, which shows which web sites, or parts of web sites, work well in terms of meeting branding or response objectives.

Andrew Smith, a research consultant at Carat Interactive, says the agency picks

the data it wants from NetValue each month and uses it with its own web analysis tool.

As the NetValue software meter sits on the user's PC at home to record their usage, the data is easy to compare with other kinds of audience data, such as BARB TV viewing data.

But Smith does not consider the NetValue data to be flawless. "Panel data has to

be put in context," he says.

"There are still accuracy issues, so you have to take the findings with a pinch of salt. We may know from our own buying experience, for example, that some of the sites that the data gives us for a particular target audience don't work, either for response or branding."

NetValue has developed an online media planning tool called Instant Media, in conjunction with Outrider, the interactive media subsidiary of Mediaedge:cia.

Instant Media is being made available to other media buying agencies and Smith says he expects Carat will use it in due course.

He is also excited about NetValue's MegaPanel of 100,000 UK internet users, which is due to launch in September, because of its sheer size and because it will include at-work users.



Carat.co.uk: NetValue panel data is compared with BMRB Internet Monitor research

of human contact, web sites need to work even harder at understanding customer needs, delivering against these and finding ways to engage with the customer," she says.

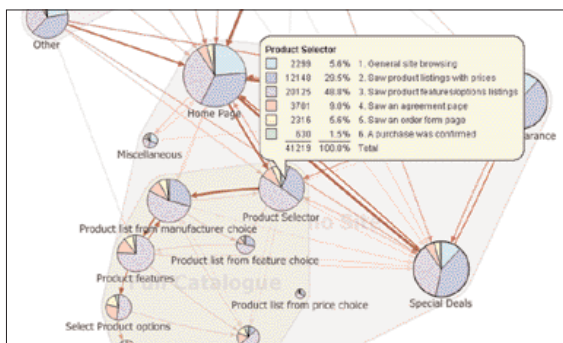
Hitwise claims that its monitoring service, which tracks the activity of more than 2.8 million UK internet accounts through deals with partner ISPs, can also help firms measure their on-line branding. It offers clients customised charts detailing how sites perform against each other, plotting up to 10 sites per chart. These charts can be based on each site's ranking, category share, user visits or time spent on each site. While some of this is no more than traditional clickstream analysis (watching

where users go online), Hitwise UK general manager Simon Chamberlain says using the competitive data gives a far more meaningful picture – for example, showing how successful a branding campaign has been. "Web behaviour can provide an immediate barometer of the advertising target market in relation to the message that is being communicated," he says.

John Woods, chief executive at web site visitor intelligence firm Site Intelligence, adds: "Simply analysing clickstream data by itself is no longer sufficient. Statistical data needs to be supported by an in-depth understanding of what web site visitors are trying to achieve."

Woods says a second generation of web analytics – or web site visitor intelligence tools – are emerging. Site Intelligence's product VBIS (Visitor Behaviour Information System) contains a tool called SiteViewer that produces a visual map illustrating web site visitor behaviour. Woods points out that it can easily be understood, even by non-technical e-business managers. "We have put a lot of emphasis on visualisation, and that has been well received," he says.

The security of a web site is easier to measure than its effect on a brand image, as many security tests can be automated. But the development of specific metrics allows a web site owner not only to compare the security of their site with the



SiteViewer: Site Intelligence creates visitor behaviour maps

Worldpop offers qualitative study of its message boards



Worldpop is carrying out qualitative studies on its audience. This helps clients measure which products go down well with which kind of audience

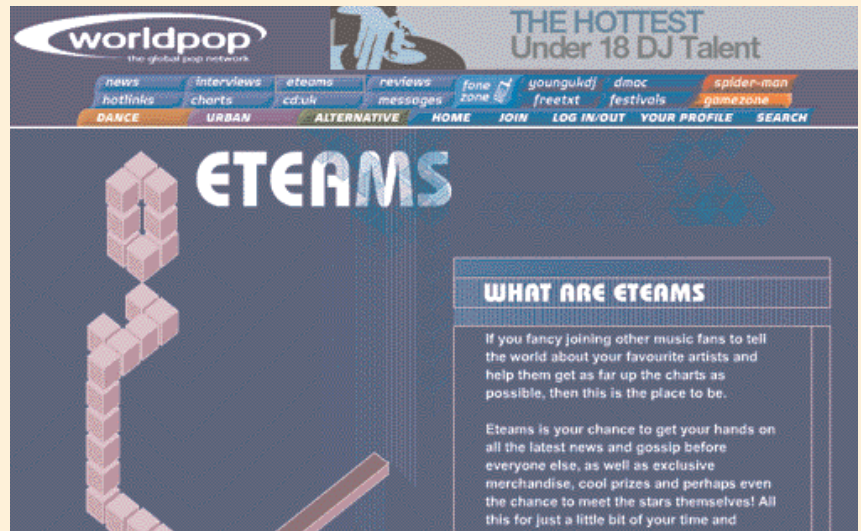
**Donia Salah
Worldpop**

The value given to a web site by its community is hard to measure, but music site Worldpop (www.worldpop.com) aims to do just that.

It has a database of details on about 200,000 of its 250,000 unique users. This information can be broken down by the category of music they prefer. Users are mostly aged from 12 to 35, but the site's core market is 16- to 24-year-olds.

Community is the cornerstone of the web site's offer, and its message boards average 2,000 new postings a day on subjects such as the best song on the new Red Hot Chili Peppers album.

Increasingly, Worldpop seeks to harness the power of its community to help clients with their marketing and measurement. Message board monitor Nurse Pop (real name Monica Stephen) is charged with recruiting



Worldpop: panels consisting of community members help create a buzz around new music

community members to join 'eteams'. This turns music-lovers into marketing activists, who are encouraged to tell the world about the new songs of their favourite artists (or indeed other products) to help create a buzz and increase sales. In return, eteam members are

rewarded with access to the latest pop gossip, exclusive merchandise and prizes.

Eteams were used to boost interest in pop band Liberty X and to help promote the launch of series six of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* on video.

"Moderation of our message boards is in-house, as

we felt external moderators weren't doing it properly," says Donia Salah, head of interactive marketing at Worldpop. "We carry out qualitative studies on our audience. This helps clients measure, prior to release, which products go down well with which kind of audience."

average for sites in the same marketplace, but also to monitor a particular web site's performance over a period of time.

Mercury Interactive carries out security audits on sites, then applies load to the site to see how much more vulnerable it is under pressure, testing it until it is near breaking point. Andy Crosby, product marketing director EMEA at Mercury Interactive, says: "We have done about 3,000 of these tests so we can say whether a site is above or below average in its sector."

Keynote Systems is also active in e-business infrastructure testing. It tests web sites for performance bottlenecks and capacity restraints. Eric Nataf, EMEA director of product marketing at Keynote Europe, says: "It is not sufficient to monitor a web site looking at clickthrough and audience. If the audience suddenly disappears, you won't know whether that is for technical reasons (the site has crashed), because the content has not been updated or because the marketing is not working. You need to benchmark and manage your performance from a technical perspective so as to detect situations where your performance or availability has degraded, which will have an impact on your audience, as users abandon the site."

As mobile network operators roll out their second- and third-generation services, such as multimedia messaging, firms will also need to track their marketing activity in these areas.

Keynote recently launched a product called Wireless Perspective 2.0, which measures the performance of WAP and SMS multi-step transactions, as well as ringtone and picture graphic downloads.

Mobile marketing company Enpocket has researched mobile marketing campaigns for more than two years using a mix of response measurement and branding measurement from independent market research. It aims to give marketers a full understanding of how well their mobile campaign has delivered. Enpocket will compare each campaign's performance with aggregated data from more than 150 wireless campaigns that it has analysed to date. It will use like-for-like metrics to evaluate how the performance of a wireless campaign compares with that of other media. Its research has been used by major brands including Coke, HSBC and Cadbury.

Clearly, there is a great deal of work being done to create new metrics. The information is out there and should not be ignored. But the question remains as to how best to measure it. □



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**Eric Mistou
NetValue**