

For display ads, being seen matters more than being clicked

SAN FRANCISCO / RESTON, US: comScore, Inc and Pretarget, the intent targeting company, have released results of an online advertising study which found that ad viewability and hover time are more strongly correlated with conversions (defined as purchases and requests for information) than clicks or total impressions.



"Your ad being seen matters more than your ad being clicked - if you have a back-end conversion metric," said Pretarget founder Keith Pieper. "After all, what good is an ad that can't be seen? It's intuitive that an ad must be seen to make an impact, and it's even more intuitive than someone hovering and engaging with an ad might convert, even absent a click."

Research methodology and approach

To arrive at these initial findings, Pretarget analysed 263 million impressions over nine months across 18 advertisers in numerous verticals. Pretarget used comScore validated Campaign Essentials™ (vCE) to collect viewability and hover data and a DSP to collect click and cookie-based conversion data. Pretarget then performed a Pearson correlation analysis of the data, including gross impressions, "views" (75% of ad within screen, either above the fold or after scrolling)*, time in-view, hover/engagements and total hover/engagement time, clicks and conversions.

Traditional display ad impression measurement and reporting simply verifies the number of ads that were sent by an ad server to a user's browser. For a variety of reasons, this way of counting impressions does not ensure that the ad ever rendered within a browser. In addition, ads can load below the fold (requiring a user to scroll down), which means that most users will probably never see the ad unless they scroll down. In the worst cases, some ads load within 1x1 pixels and therefore never render as viewable impressions.

Research findings show ad hover most highly correlated with conversion

The research findings indicate that the traditional way of buying mass impressions and hoping for conversions (aka "spray and pray") is not the most effective approach. The results showed that ad hover/interaction (correlation = 0.49) and viewable impressions (correlation = 0.35) had highest correlation with conversion, while gross impressions (correlation = 0.17) was significantly lower. Perhaps most interestingly, clicks (correlation = 0.01) had the lowest correlation with conversion, far under-performing all other metrics analysed in the study. These findings suggest that advertisers and media planners ought to break their addiction to clicks and instead look to more meaningful metrics for evaluating campaign performance.

"The Pretarget study helps illuminate several critically important findings for the digital advertising community," said Kirby Winfield, SVP of Corporate Development, comScore. "First, it once again demonstrates the perils of relying on click-throughs for measuring the performance of display ad campaigns, with this metric showing virtually zero correlation with total conversions. Secondly, it highlights why the viewable impression - which is now easily measurable through vCE - is significantly more meaningful than the unvalidated impression. Finally, this study shows why other non-click metrics of engagement, such as interaction or hovering, may be much more important in evaluating campaign performance than the click ever was. It's time to start measuring the impact of campaigns using metrics that really matter, not just the ones that are most easily measured."

The Pretarget analysis supports several third party studies with consistent conclusions. MediaMind *2009 Benchmark Report* released in July 2010 found that "on average, increasing Dwell [hover] from 5% to 15%, increases conversion rate by 45%, from 0.4% to 0.6%." Casale Media's 2011 *Ad Visibility Report*, found that "ads appearing above the fold were 6.7x more effective at generating conversions than those appearing below the fold."

Pretarget previously found that approximately 89% of display ads on its network load above the fold or appear after a user scrolls down, creating an opportunity for a user to see the banner. Pretarget's position paper is available for download at <http://www.pretarget.com>

To participate in additional research as part of a broader study, contact info@pretarget.com

**The Making Measurement Make Sense (3MS) defines "in-view" as 50%+ of the pixels of an ad being visible in the browser, and comScore vCE adheres to this definition for its typical definition of "in-view". The Pretarget studies, however, used a more conservative in-view requirement of 75% visibility.*

About Pretarget

Pretarget offers keyword based intent ad targeting using patented and patent-pending internet search and behavioural algorithms that reach users "ahead of the click". Pretarget's hybrid contextual-behavioural targeting complements existing search and retargeting campaigns with custom keyword based segmentation. No site tagging is needed. Pretarget is well suited for online advertisers who have maxed out search, find site retargeting offers little scale, are fiercely competitive and see the value of an ad impression.

About comScore validated Campaign Essentials (vCE)

vCE is a holistic solution for complete campaign delivery validation and in-flight optimisation. Unlike existing single-point solutions, vCE provides an unduplicated accounting of impressions delivered across a variety of dimensions, such as ads delivered in-view, to the right audience, in the right geography, in a brand safe environment and absent of fraudulent delivery. vCE reports on reach and frequency, comprehensive demographics and behavioural segments. This measurement eliminates all impressions that never had a chance to make an impact, providing a more realistic and accurate picture of campaign delivery.

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