

Five Questions To Ask of Your Site Search Data Including a search box in your site and tracking how people use it can be a gold mine for information regarding visitors interests. Each time visitors search your site, they are effectively telling you in their own words what they are looking for. This article shows you five key ways you can use the data in your Google Analytics Site Search reports to understand visitor intent.

Note: If you don't have a search box on your site yet, you might consider using the Google Custom Search Engine (both free and paid versions are available). If you already have a site search solution, it is highly likely that Google Analytics Site Search reports are compatible with it (including Google's GSA and Mini products).

1. How frequently do visitors use my search box and what are they looking for?
2. Where do people begin searches and what do they find?
3. Are visitors satisfied with what they find?
4. How do different groups of visitors search my site?
5. What business outcomes result from visitors searching my site?

How frequently do visitors use my search box and what are they looking for?

Use the Site Search Usage report to find out how many visits included search activity and how many didn't. To find out what people were looking for, look at the Search Terms report.

Where do people begin searches and what do they find?

Use the Start Pages report to identify the pages from which visitors began their search. Make sure that the pages listed on this report are pages from which you'd expect visitors to search and not pages from which visitors are searching out of frustration. For example, visitors shouldn't have to search from a landing page. Ideally, a landing page provides precisely the information that the referring link or ad promises. If a visitor searches on Google for a specific product and clicks on your AdWords ad, they shouldn't have to search for the product again after landing on your site.

Once visitors search your site and are provided with search results page, which pages are they then likely to visit? You can get this information from the Destination Pages report.

Are visitors satisfied with what they find?

How good is your site search? Does it actually help your visitors find what they are looking for? The % Search Exits Metric provided on many of the reports provides a good indicator. This tells you the percentage of searches in which the visitor left your site after searching instead of clicking any of the results pages that you offered. The higher the percentage, the less satisfied your visitors are and the more important it is for you to tune your site search to provide relevant results.

A related metric is Results Pageviews/Search, the number of times visitors viewed a results page after searching. One hypothesis could be that if you provide the most relevant results, people will use the first results page and continue to look at other pages on your site. If Results Pageviews/Search is higher than 1 or 2, it means that people have to sift through more information to find relevant results.

How do different groups of visitors search my site?

Many of the Site Search reports have the same cross-segmentation drop-down menu available with Google Analytics. As a result, you can cross-examine site search behavior in a variety of ways. Let's consider one interesting example: Of visitors who found my site by searching "vacation rentals Miami" on Google, what did they search for once they were on my site?

You can do this by going to the Site Search Terms report and then cross-segmenting by "keyword" using the drop-down menu.

What outcomes result from visitors searching my site?

Are there any business-generating benefits to providing a search box on your site? Does having a search box result in higher conversion rates or e-commerce revenue? The Goal Conversion and E-commerce tabs provide this information for all aspects of site search and all groups of searchers.

For example, to identify the impact that visitors who searched the "books" category had on your business, go to the Categories report and select said category in the table. The Site Search Category report for "books" will appear. Now, click the Goal Conversion tab to see conversion information and the E-commerce tab to see e-commerce metrics. Do you want to know the total revenue from this group of searchers? Look at the Revenue metric on the E-commerce tab. If you want to compare revenue for site searchers and non-site searchers, go to the Usage report and select Revenue from the drop-down menu in the table.

To find out more, please don't hesitate to contact us using the form at the bottom of the page.