Using Google Analytics to measure visitor statistics: The case of food composition websites

Measuring visitor statistics is a core activity for any website provider. However, the analytical methods have so far been quite limited, difficult, expensive, or cumbersome. Google Analytics (GA) offers a free tool for measuring and analysing visitor statistics. GA was tested on three food composition websites (Denmark, Finland, and Switzerland). All the websites had a considerable number of visitors, which seemed to increase with the maturity of the website. The results also suggested that there were a considerable number of potential unreached users in Denmark and particularly in Switzerland, thus suggesting that promotion be increased and search engines be taken into account more during website design. About 15–20% of users visited the website more than nine times and about 20% spent there more than 10 min on the site.

Following traffic from referring websites showed that most of the visitors could not be categorised as food or nutrition professionals. Our experience showed that GA was quite easy to use and gave useful and versatile information that can be used to compare different websites and improve the website design. Finally, we would like to encourage other food composition website providers to utilise either GA or another of the similar tools available.

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