REVIEW: ROLE OF PAGE VIEW AS A COMPARATIVE RATINGS METRIC
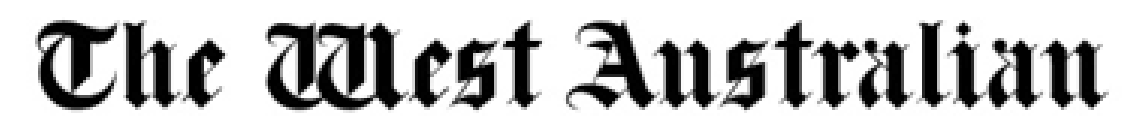
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This paper has been developed by the IAB Australia Measurement Council with representatives from the following organisations:

Page Views have been a key metric in digital ratings systems since the mid-1990s and have historically been an important volume indicator when comparing sites and publishers. Within the IAB Australia Measurement Council, consisting representatives of 17 different media organisations and the Media Federation of Australia, there has been discussion for a number of years around the current role of page view reporting in ratings products used for media planning and comparing the popularity and engagement of media entities. This paper is to open this discussion to the broader media and advertising community and to invite comment on this proposal until the 15th June 2018.

When digital ratings systems that compared different publishers (such as those provided by Nielsen and ComScore), were introduced into market, the digital media universe consisted of desktop only and primarily browser driven traffic (with some notable chat related apps such as MSN Messenger), and Page Views provided a fairly clean like for like metric when comparing traffic to sites but not for actually measuring audience.

Page Views, along with sessions, time spent and initially unique browsers (replaced by unique audience within the IAB approved currency run by Nielsen) have been core ratings metrics and also ones that that drove other metrics (e.g. frequency, time per person, etc.). However there are now a number of reasons that comparing different sites based on Page Views may not be valid:

- Page Views do not account for app usage – in December 2017 54% of digital time was spent on smartphones and of this time over 80% was spent on apps
- Increasing number of sites built using a single page application – the audience interacts within the page which dynamically serves content rather than loading new pages
- Increasing number of sites with infinite scroll - loads content continuously as the user scrolls down the page, eliminating the need for pagination and thus additional Page Views
- Page Views are an increasingly inaccurate proxy for ad inventory – with a broader variety of site designs, apps and ad formats the relationship between page impressions and ad impressions when comparing media properties is weak.

Note this paper is not discussing tracking the same site with the same design. Internal metrics and analytics used for measuring the performance of an individual media property will often differ from the ones used by the media buying community (agencies and advertisers). Also it should be noted that the paper is not addressing ad views/impressions.

For a number of years in the Australian market the IAB and Nielsen have been promoting the use of two key metrics when reviewing ratings data - Unique Audience (people) and Time. As well as being metrics common to all digital properties they are also key metrics across all media channels essential for doing comparative cross channel analyses.

Sessions remain a useful metric when assessing audience frequency and loyalty, though often most useful when combined with time (i.e. time per session) and compared across devices as behaviour will often differ on different devices.

The Measurement Council is reviewing three options in relation to Page Views reporting into Nielsen digital audience measurement currency products (Digital Content Ratings and Digital Ratings Monthly):
- No change to current reporting
- Disendorse page view metrics as a planning metric but page view data to remain in Nielsen ratings products
- Disendorse Page Views and remove from currency ratings products provided by Nielsen listed above. Note this would not apply to analytics and traffic based products.

Once a decision on any market changes has been made, a timeline and communication will be distributed via the IAB and Nielsen.

Comments and questions on this paper should be sent directly to Gai Le Roy, Director of Research, IAB Australia (gai@iabaustralia.com.au) by COB on 15th June 2018.