

## Chapter 54

# Shaping Content Strategies with User Analytics and Identities: How User Analytics is Shaping Editorial Strategy, Driving Marketing, and Generating New Revenue

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### ABSTRACT

*User data has become the foundation of many businesses. The ability to increase the breadth and depth of user data to analyze trends is now the roadmap for information companies – providing direction for new business, content strategy, print to digital shifts and overall retention and engagement. In this chapter, the author will explore user identity and the three key core data buckets – Profile, Activity, and Behavioral – that define how to decipher audience members and their ‘user records.’ The chapter will specifically showcase how user identity shapes editorial strategy, marketing messaging and drives revenue. It will look at the impact specific technologies are having on what data can be captured as well as the complexities around data capture in general – standardization, preservation, storage, relational data opportunities and data optimization.*

### INTRODUCTION

Recently, the author was shopping online for family in preparation for summer. She needed children’s bathing suits, new beach towels and some rack equipment for an automobile. She went to at least ten consumer sites, including Lands End, L.L. Bean, Amazon, Thule.com, REI.com and Zappos, comparing styles, prices and item availability. While shopping, she added items to her online cart, either purchasing them or abandoning them, and in some cases abandoning the site entirely. Customer service as well as exit intent automation interrupted the shopping process to ask if any help was needed or to attempt to stop her from exiting the site(s). She did not interact with any online support and in the end did purchase merchandise from three sites.

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As an expert in user marketing, the author is intrigued by the approaches companies use to process customer activity for upsell or follow up engagement opportunities. It is impressive when the process is well executed and, more specifically, when there is contextual relevancy and strong timing with the follow up. In this recent shopping expedition, Zappos was the clear winner of the day on both fronts. When checking Facebook while shopping, the author noticed almost within seconds that items left in the Zappos shopping cart or items viewed, or items like them were suddenly appearing in the margins and body of the Facebook feed. The same dynamics are shaping content delivery as well.

## **STRATEGIES WITH USER ANALYTICS AND IDENTITIES**

### **Contextual Targeting and Retargeting**

There will be those who are “spooked” by the Big Brother aspect of contextual marketing and retargeting, viewing these practices as creepy, disruptive or as an invasion of privacy. Yet for digital media and marketing professionals, it is interesting to observe the tactics and how well or poorly methods and technology are executed. Companies as well as news and media companies are in need to continually drive for increased sophistication in editorial and marketing practices to increase readership, user engagement and revenue.

In the contextual marketing space, contextually targeting shoppers based on online behavior makes a connection and/or a presumption about what the shopper is thinking. As one shops, companies that leverage contextual targeting are anonymously cookie-ing visitors so that they can follow their actions. By tracking what links are clicked, what pages are perused, and what items are searched, the business is investing in re-marketing to place their products in front of shoppers again and again as they surf the web. This level of data capture, or what is also referred to as activity data, has a short shelf life. The re-marketed ads are relevant for a limited period of time before the shopper makes a purchase and for a short period of time afterward. The companies that have built and sell this technology and level of targeting are attempting to create an experience that is tied to anecdotal or potentially statistically proven ‘human nature.’ They are trying to re-engage, remind or re-attract buyers to what they were initially considering for purchase.

Retargeting has become a big business. Companies such as Bizo, ReTargeter and Adroll specialize in retargeting. Adroll, for example, has been around since 2007 and today it partners with some of the largest online social companies such as Facebook, Google, Yahoo and Microsoft. Retargeting enables their clients to reach 98 percent of sites on the Internet. Adroll claims extremely high return on investment (ROI) values for clients and cites advanced targeted techniques as one of their main differentiators. Like Adroll, Bizo is a multi-channel business-to-business (B2B) marketing solutions company. They also partner with major companies allowing them to reach more than 90 percent of the business population in the United States. ReTargeter is a display advertising solutions company that specializes in audience targeting and retargeting, claiming to reach 98 percent sites on the Internet.

There are some lessons digital media companies can learn from early experiences in this space. Despite the improvements in contextual targeting, issues such as discrepancies, irrelevancy and intrusion still permeate the user experience. Intelligently targeting ads or content and making sure they are relevant still present challenges for businesses. Repeatedly displaying an ad for something the buyer has already purchased is not effective. As an example, the author recently registered to attend what looked to be an

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