



Visitor Engagement and Analysis

Newzealand.govt.nz

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Summary of site usage

The site appears to draw traffic well and evenly among the traffic sources of direct, search, and referral. The acquisition of visitors is working as expected.

Once visitors get to the site, we expect to see them navigate to the details about an organization then click off-site to visit that organization. We would expect to see at least over half of all visits to be taking this action - unfortunately this isn't happening. Less than a third of all visits to newzealand.govt.nz actually take the desired action and visit an external site.

Events are taken into consideration when looking at visitor engagement. The overall engagement for the site is 4.70% which is below the expected 16% that would mean the site is performing satisfactorily. The highest performing section of the site was Business and Finance at just over 11%.

There appears to be a high task abandonment for this site (this could only be confirmed with user observation). The main navigation appears to work satisfactorily, but once a user reaches either a search results page, or an organization detail page, there is no further action taken.

More investigation is needed into exactly what events are being fired from what pages. Then a remedy will be needed to make sure the data being collected is accurate. However, even if there is remedial action needed to track the site more accurately, it is unlikely to double the number of events being sent. The events would need to double in order to make the site function at the minimum level we would expect for a directory of this type.

Visitor Engagement metrics

The visitor engagement measure pulls together a variety of highly relevant yet disparate metrics and combines them to give an understanding of how engaged visitors are. The data used to calculate this measure are all-important and valuable but starts to offer more value when viewed and used in conjunction with other data from the same site. The best way to use all the data together is with the visitor engagement measure.

The calculation takes into account around 6 key metrics and has both an Engaged and Not Engaged calculation. The theory is based on a standard distribution curve and contends that every visit to the site will fall around this model. This means we can plot each visit to the site and figure out if the visit falls at the bottom end of the curve (Not Engaged) or near the top of the curve (Engaged).

Commentary on engagement

Generally the engagement is low across the whole site. This is taking into account the purpose of the site being a directory that links visitors off to other sites. The challenge appears to be that visitors are not getting much past the home or search results page.

Paths through the site

The most common path through the site is Home > search > exit or a variation of this that includes more searches. If visitors don't go to the home page to start with, they might go to a section and then they will come to a search page. This would suggest that either the search is excellent on the site, or the navigation isn't working for most people.

Bounce rate and landing pages

The bounce rate for the site is on the lower side of the industry average (57%). This is a good thing and would require a large amount of work to decrease this.

The bounce rate for landing pages is also really good. The image above is comparing the bounce rate of your top landing pages to the site average. As you can see, the green bars indicate a lower bounce rate for all the landing pages. There isn't much to add here other than to point out that it's good.

Events (links to external sites)

31% of all visits had an event. Practically this means they clicked an external link. Clicking an external link makes up 94% of all events for this site.

For an average site, this would be a lot of events but given the nature of this site it feels lower than expected. The nature of this site is a directory to other sites. We would expect that the majority of activity on this site to be people finding a page about an external organization, then clicking the link to visit that site. Less than a third of all visits take the action the site intended.

Internal search

16.68% of all visits to the site include an on site search at some point.

The A-Z directory is an interesting challenge for analyzing the data because it uses the search function of the site. What we can't tell is

how many people started in the directory section and then completed an organic search vs. clicked a link to a pre-arranged search.

An analysis of the top 250 search terms that originated from the directory sections shows no searches that appears to be manually typed in to the search box.

- Normal searches from any page other than directory = 88,239 = 8.54%
- Searches that originate from directory pages = 24,105 = 21.46%

Interestingly there are 17% of visits with internal search on the site. That is interesting given the comment I made earlier about the most common path for visitors is to search on the site. So what is happening to the rest? They are bouncing or exiting off pages.

Visits without internal search are more likely to not find what they are looking for. See the image above showing the higher bounce and exit rates for the site in general.

Recommendations

1. Do a small amount of user testing specifically around using the search. Ask why they use it, when they do use it are they finding it useful.
2. If the above isn't feasible, look into heap maps, click maps, or user observation (Crazy Egg, Click Tail, or Visual Website Optimiser)
3. Make the call to action bigger and brighter. This site is all about getting people to the right place, so lets make that as easy and obvious as possible.

4. Look specifically at the redesign of the 'browse topics' page as this seems to be where most visitors are either engaging, or leaving the site.
5. Consider how the referral traffic could be pushed up. The usual method is to make a list of sites that would be well served by linking to your site, then work on getting links from them. The other method is SEO link building.
6. Complete a detailed investigation of event tracking and recommendations for fixing the tracking that isn't working.