

Hits vs. Unique Visitors vs. Page Impressions What You Should Know

September 24, 2007 by Gaman

Once in a while, I came across a blog post that proudly announces their blog or site is getting thousands of hits per month. Either they don't know what hits mean or it's like the bragging rights for those who don't know better.

Hits shouldn't exist in your vocabulary unless you are a server administrator. There are better metrics out there to gauge a site's popularity and hits are irrelevant as far as the average site owners are concern.

So what's a Hit?

A hit is generated when a file is requested and served on your website. The file can be anything from the ordinary HTML document, an image file, a video and so on. An HTML document with 10 image files on it will register 11 hits (1 HTML file + 10 image file) when the page is viewed by a visitor.

Therefore, a page containing 1000 images will register 1001 hits when viewed by a single visitor. The same visitor may reload the same page 10 times to register 10,010 hits instantly. Obviously, that doesn't mean there are 10,010 people visiting your site

So really, using hits to gauge a site's popularity is misleading and there's nothing to brag about when you get thousands of hits per day. You might just as well talk about how much bandwidth your site is consuming daily.

What Is a Page Impression?

Page impression, also known as page view is just that. It shows how many times the page is viewed. For example, when you click a link and the page is loaded, that request is counted as one page view. When you click the back button on your web browser to return to the previous page, another page view is registered.

As you can see, there may therefore be many hits per page view.

Page impression can be used to gauge the ability of your pages to retain the visitors' interest, sometimes called the stickiness of your website. High number of page view per visitor means your visitors may be browsing several pages during their visits. This can be a good thing to mention if you are selling advertising on your site.

Surely, most advertisers prefer to have their ads viewed as many time as possible.

What Is a Unique Visitor?

Unique visitors are what matters when you want to show off a bit

A unique visitor means a visit from a person to a web site, at least once, typically within a 24 hour period.

Several visits from the same person to that website within a 24 hour period are only counted once. The person is identified by his or her IP address and sometimes through cookies, which acts like an online fingerprint.

So, if a blog gets 1000 unique visitors per day, it means that 1000 different individuals have visited the blog within the 24 hours period. While several individual may have visited the blog several times during the period to read new posts or comments, each visit would be counted once only.

Next time if you'd like to talk about how popular your blog is, tell people how many unique visitors you have instead of hits.