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Graduate Research

# New uses for eCommerce analytics in eLearning

The demand for online learning is increasing, and eLearning and digital marketing are being used together in new and innovative ways. There has always been some degree of overlap between eCommerce and eLearning. Like marketing professionals, learning professionals also have audience engagement and retention as primary goals. Digital marketers may even produce eLearning themselves to inform users about their products. Web analytics insights can be used to improve learning experience and make business decisions related to education and training. According to Global News Wire, the global eLearning market is expected to surpass \$315 billion by 2025 (2020).

Learning analytics has historically been the field of big data linked to education. Learning analytics refers to the collection and analysis of data about learners and their environments (Miller, 2020) for the purpose of understanding and improving learning outcomes. Learning analytics data primarily is used to measure student KPI's and evaluate teaching effectiveness in support of educational development. The learning professional has historically sought data from a narrower pool of users in the form of students taking their courses. Since the rise of massive open online course (MOOC) providers like LinkedIn and Coursera, learning professionals need to think more like digital marketers than ever. Wallace (2020) asserts that if developers want to

engage a wider audience to take their courses, they need to think of their courses as campaigns. Whether it is a fully interactive module or a video tutorial, course developers can use digital marketing to grow their online presence.

In addition to MOOCs, cloud-hosted learning management systems also enable eLearning developers to reach a wider audience. Whether the platform is an education or corporate LMS, courses can be hosted and then linked through a website portal for wider access. Though learning management systems themselves are capable of tracking and reporting, such data is primarily focused on learning performance, not user experience. Web analytics can be used to improve the learning experience by using insights to evaluate success or failure of goals, and drive strategy. Among these strategies increasingly is the use of technology outside the classroom. Per higher education technology provider Ellucian, 97% of students believe technology outside the classroom is as important as technology inside the classroom (2020). The proliferation of mobile learning technology necessitates point-of-need access outside the classroom using web-based platforms.

To that end, a Google Analytics account can be linked to a web portal, allowing access to audience and acquisition insights for the creation of course content and marketing campaigns. If the system and organizational information security policies allow, it may be possible to integrate Google Analytics an LMS such as Docebo (2021). Audience reports such as demographics and technology might be used to understand who is accessing the portal or LMS in order to improve and better target future course content. If the data shows the majority of course users are female aged 25-34, then new courses could be added with subject matter that is of more interest to that demographic. Technology reports can show which platforms to focus user experience testing on.

An acquisition report that shows social as the primary channel might lead to the creation a new subscriber campaign on social media.

Google Analytics also makes it possible to analyze traffic at the course level, now that HTML5 has replaced Flash as a content standard. Spermon (2020) explains how Articulate Storyline, a widely used course authoring tool, enables integration with Google Analytics using slide triggers. This may give insights beyond what can be gleaned using LMS tracking data, allowing for a drill-down all the way to the slide level. A course developer can see how long learners spent on a particular slide, and whether they actually engaged with the slide interactions. In terms of marketing campaigns themselves, Parker (n.d.) explains how such data might be used to promote eLearning courses using push notifications. Where such analytics integration functions independently of the LMS, the developer would still have access to data reports if the course is being hosted outside of an LMS.

The relationship between eCommerce and eLearning is evolving. As distance and mobile learning grow in popularity, web analytics insights can be used in more innovative ways to drive digital learning and marketing initiatives by organizations.

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