

How to attract good quality traffic to your site

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Virtually every organization and initiative, including yours, has a website. It is central to your communication, marketing, and sales efforts. Your site is crucial even if you don't *sell* anything online. It can be where customers find information, sign up for an event, or ask to meet with a member of your sales team, just to mention a few critical actions. Companies normally have high expectations on their websites. But of course, a site is useless without visits, without traffic. Contrary to what many may think, what's important is not receiving a lot of traffic but a lot of good quality traffic, also called *qualified traffic*.

Qualified traffic consists of people who have a sincere interest in your web's content. They are in the market for what you offer, and often, they fit your target profile. Therefore, they are more likely to engage with the site meaningfully. Compared to the average visitor, they spend more time on your site, visit more pages, and are more likely to convert.¹ Quality traffic is the first step in the key sequence: Attract, convert, and retain. Also, good traffic brings more good traffic. Algorithms reward relevant and engaging sites by placing them first and more frequently. Unfortunately, the opposite is also true: Poor traffic hurts your positioning, making you less visible.

How to attract good traffic? In this note, we explore the 11 crucial channels of good traffic (see **Figure 1**), covering how they work, their advantages and costs, and their main interactions with each other (see **Table 1** for a summary and **Exhibit 1** for an expanded version of the Table). This note complements note IESE MN-406-E: "Web Analytics: Demystifying Performance Marketing." Here, we explain how to attract good quality traffic. There, we describe how to analyze whether your strategy is working.

¹ Conversion can mean different things: purchasing, signing up for a newsletter or an event, requesting a demo, etc.

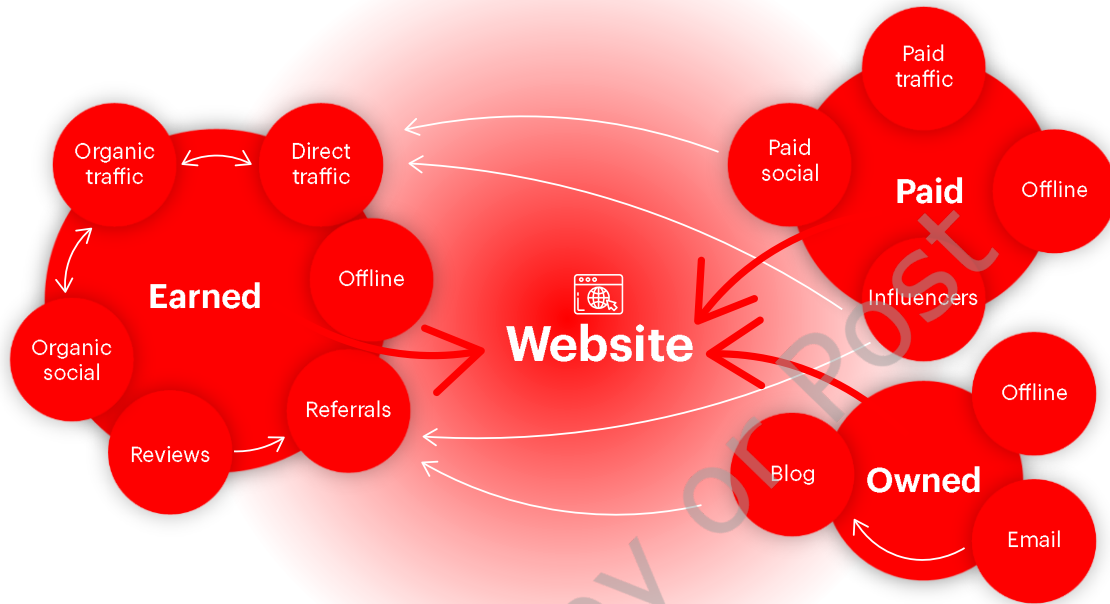
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Figure 1
Eleven channels for good quality traffic



Source: Hugo Escolá.

Table 1
Summary characteristics of channels

	Type ²	Time to impact	Cost	Difficulty
Direct traffic	earned	medium	low	medium-high
Organic traffic	earned	long	medium-high	high
Paid traffic	paid	short	medium-high	low-medium
Organic social	earned	medium	low	medium
Paid social	paid	short	medium	low-medium
Referrals	earned	long	medium-high	high
Blog	owned	long	low	medium-high
Email	owned	medium	low	medium
Influencers	paid	short	medium-high	high
Reviews	earned	medium	low	low
Offline	paid/owned/ earned	short	varies significantly	medium

Source: Prepared by the authors.

² **Earned media:** what people say about you, through word of mouth, reviews, or posts. **Paid media:** any marketing effort that involves paying to display content across social media, search engines, or websites. **Owned media:** digital content you create, such as your website, blog, or social media accounts.



Direct traffic

Direct traffic are visitors who already know you. They have typed your web address in their browser because (1) they knew it beforehand, (2) they clicked a link in an email, PDF, or bookmark,³ or (3) they started typing your name, and the browser suggested your address through autocomplete. The more recognized a brand is and the more loyal its customers, the higher the volume of direct traffic.

A number of strategies can help you increase your direct traffic: from brand awareness campaigns in traditional media, to simple actions such as including a link to your website in email signatures. Producing quality content motivates your visitors to save your page in their favorites; their future visits will be labeled as direct traffic.

Beware of two issues that can lead to wrong conclusions about your direct traffic: 1) Web analytics platforms often classify traffic as direct when they are unable to tag it correctly, and 2) if you provide access to a private area for your customers (for example, to check the status of their order or perform administrative tasks), it will also be counted as direct traffic.

Time to impact: medium | Cost: low | Difficulty: medium-high

Organic search (search engine optimization, SEO)

Organic traffic is the traffic you get from search engines (e.g., Google) without paying for ads. Users type in what they're looking for, your site organically appears in the search results, and they click on your link, which leads to your website. These are qualified visitors because they are looking for something to which you are connected.

When a search engine displays its results, organic links appear below sponsored links. How you place within these organic results directly affects the chances of users clicking on your link. The lower the position, the lower the chances (see **Figure 2**).

Good organic positioning is crucial for your company because it leads to a steady stream of quality visitors, without the incremental cost of each link click. However, your positioning depends on ever-changing criteria from the search engines and on the strategies followed by your competitors to improve their own rankings. Good SEO positioning requires continuous effort.

A successful organic positioning strategy involves multiple actions: technical website optimization, regular content creation and optimization, a well-planned social media strategy, and more. It's said that organic positioning is influenced by over 200 factors, including elements like website loading speed and the age of the domain being used (check for instance "The Periodic Table of SEO Elements"). A typical tension is deciding between positioning generic words with a high search volume and competition, or going for more specific words, with less search volume and competition but that can yield high-quality traffic.

³ Those who click on third-party website links are considered "referral traffic," which we discuss later.