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A low-performing website will starve your return on investment (ROI) and can damage your brand. But you need to understand what is performing poorly—the targeting of your marketing campaigns, poor reviews of your products/services on the Web [fee payment gateway](#), or your website's ability to convert once a visitor arrives. Web analytics provides the tools for gathering this information and enables you to benchmark the effects. Note that I have been deliberately using the word tools in its plural form.

This is because the term web analytics covers many areas that require different methodologies or data-collection techniques. For example, offsite tools are used to measure the size of your potential audience (opportunity), your share of voice (visibility), and the buzz (comments/sentiment) that is happening on the Internet as a whole.

These are relevant metrics regardless of your website's existence. Conversely, onsite tools measure the visitor's onsite journey, its drivers, and your website's performance. These are directly related to your website's existence.

The differences in methodology between offsite and onsite web measurement tools are significant, and this leads to very different results. Even for basic website numbers, such as the number of visitors a website receives or the total number of page views, the values can vary dramatically. This is a constant and exasperating problem for site owners, media buyers, and marketers alike who attempt the futile task of reconciling the metrics.

The truth is that metrics obtained with offsite methods cannot be reconciled with those from onsite tools—it's like comparing apples to oranges and often the differences are large, for example, +/- 100 percent is not uncommon.

Whenever confronted with this problem from a client, I summarize the differences as follows: Offsite web analytics tools measure your potential website audience. They are the macro tools that allow you to see the bigger picture of how your website compares to others. Onsite web analytics tools measure the actual visitor traffic arriving on your website [free payment gateway](#). They are capable of tracking the engagements and interactions your visitors have, for example, whether they convert to a customer or lead, how they got to that point, or where they dropped out of the process altogether.

It is not logical to use one methodology to measure the impact of another. Offsite and onsite analytics should be used to complement each other—not compete against each other.

If you have already experienced looking at metrics from pay-per-click advertising campaigns, Google Analytics is simply the widening of that report view to see all referrals and behavior of visitors. If you are new to any kind of web metrics reporting, then the amount of information available can feel overwhelming at first. However, bear with me—this book is intended to guide you through the important aspects of what you need to know in order to be up and running with Google Analytics quickly and efficiently.