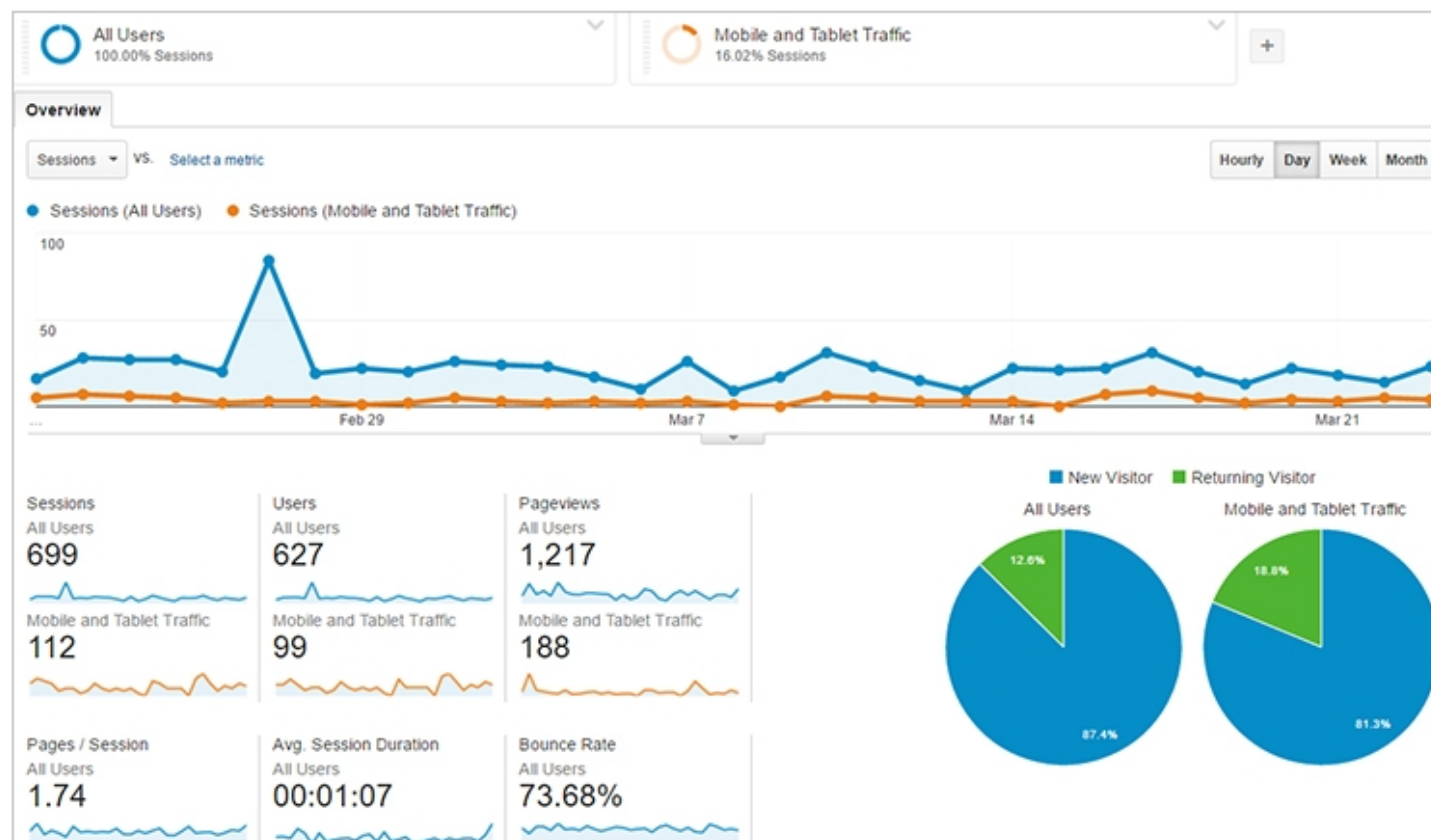


# What Marketing Metrics Mean to Your Dental Practice

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Is your dental marketing plan successful? If you can't answer that question, you are not alone. About [one third](#) of businesses report that online metrics don't reflect the financial effect of marketing activities, while nearly a quarter find it difficult to tell exactly what is being measured.

However, this data provides a wealth of information, if you know what to measure and how to interpret it. Here's what you need to know about the most important metrics, what they really mean, and how to avoid inaccurate or misleading information.

## Google Analytics

Your website is the hub of your online presence and digital marketing. For most webmasters, Google Analytics is the go-to place to track website performance. Be sure that it is configured to exclude bot traffic, or the numbers shown in your dashboard may be skewed by search engines and other automated programs that crawl your site, simulating user views and actions.

The top analytics include:

- **Keyword rank:** This is a link's position in search results for a specific query. It is important, because the first links that appear will receive the most clicks. However, it is not as reliable of a metric as it once was. With Google's personalized search, results are tailored according to the user's location and search history, so every result page is not identical.
- **Pageviews:** This is exactly what it sounds like—the number of times a page has been viewed in a given timeframe. Although it is an important metric, it does not tell you how those people found your site, or what they did. You need to look deeper into metrics such as traffic sources, referrals, and behaviors to gain valuable insights.

- **Bounce rate:** This is one of the most important and least precise metrics. Ideally, it tells you the percentage of people who visited your website and quickly left again, without taking action. However, the default settings of Google Analytics record a very limited number of event types. For an accurate bounce rate, event tracking should be [customized and optimized](#).

## Social Media

Although many business owners still think of social media as “something the kids do,” it has become an integral part of digital marketing. People post on Facebook asking for referrals to a good dentist, tweet about their experiences in your office, and post pictures of their new smiles on Instagram. If you aren’t part of the conversation, you are missing out. The most common social metrics include:

- **Fans and followers:** When people follow you on a social network, your posts appear in their newsfeeds or streams. This number tells you the potential size of your audience, but it does not guarantee all of those people will see every post. Depending on the amount of time they spend on social media, most users only see a fraction of the content from profiles they follow.
- **Social reach:** This metric measures how many people actually saw your content. Usually, it will be a small percentage of your followers. However, when a post is shared, that person’s friends will see it, even if they don’t follow you. If you use paid advertising, or receive a large number of shares, a post’s reach may dramatically exceed the number of followers you have.
- **Engagement:** This tells you how many users liked, shared, commented on, clicked, or otherwise interacted with your post. It is one of the most important social metrics, because it confirms that people not only saw your content, but connected with and responded to it.

## Conversion Rate

You might be thinking that these numbers still don’t mean much to your business. Maybe digital marketing is attracting a lot of attention, but you don’t know if that is translating to more new patients and more returning patients. Conversion rate, on the other hand, describes the percentage of people who take a specific action.

Ideally, conversion rate should measure the number of people who are converted into leads. For example, call tracking numbers can be used to calculate how many phone calls your office receives as a result of a marketing campaign.

Unfortunately, conversion rate can be misleading if your marketing team is measuring an action that is several steps away from actual leads. For example, a landing page promoting your newsletter may be configured to track visitors who convert to subscribers. When viewing conversion rate data, be sure that you know if it is relevant to an aspect of the marketing campaign, or if it is actually measuring leads.

## Return on Investment

Return on investment (ROI) is probably the single most important metric in any marketing campaign and many other business expenses. It is also one of the hardest to analyze. How much money are you spending on marketing, and how much profit is it generating? With good use of tracking numbers, codes, and other tools, you can reasonably measure the number of new patients generated by a specific campaign. If you analyze the type of treatments scheduled, and the profit from those procedures, you will have an accurate, but incomplete, measurement of ROI.

The value of reputation building, brand loyalty, and returning patients is difficult to quantify. Maybe some new patients didn’t click an ad or social post. They stopped by your office or Googled your practice name, but they sought you out because they already knew that you are an expert in the treatment they need. Maybe a returning patient hasn’t seen you in years, but that person still feels connected and considers you his or her dentist, due to frequent social media contact.

These examples are marketing successes that are unlikely to be reflected in ROI data. How can you measure them? This question actually answers another common question: why you should care about metrics such as Facebook likes and website visits. Online interaction is a gauge of reputation, loyalty, and brand awareness. The

next time you are presented with a confusing and seemingly vague report of marketing metrics, take the time to understand all of the numbers.

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