Content Optimization with HitsLink
Improve conversion rates through Multivariate and A/B testing.

Introduction

What is the best way to improve conversion rates on your eCommerce site? Improve the content. Better copy, more compelling images, and more enticing offers are all great ideas, but how do you know the new content is actually better? Multivariate and A/B split testing involve serving different versions of content to your visitors simultaneously and comparing the results. This paper will discuss both A/B split testing and Multivariate testing procedures and how to track your test results with HitsLink Platinum.

What is A/B or split testing?

A/B testing, also known as split testing, is a method of testing by which a baseline control sample is compared to a variety of single-variable test samples in order to improve conversion rates. A classic direct mail tactic, this method has been adopted within the online space to test content such as banner ads, emails and landing pages.

Significant improvements in conversion rates and other key performance indicators (KPIs) can be seen through testing elements like copy text, layouts, images and colors. However, not all elements produce the same improvements, and by looking at the results from different tests, it is possible to identify those elements that consistently tend to produce the greatest improvements.

Users of the A/B testing method create multiple copies of content, including the control, to see which single variable is most effective in increasing the conversion rate or other desired outcome. In order to be effective, the test must reach enough visitors so there is a reasonable chance of detecting a meaningful difference between the control and other content.

For example, you could compare a current offer page to a version with new copy. If you have 2000 visits, the results may look like this:

Content Version	Visits	Conversions	Conversion Rate
Copy A	1000	20	2%
Copy B	1000	30	3%

In this set of results, it's easy to see that Copy B was more effective than Copy A.

The advantage of an A/B test is that it's quick and easy to set up, and you can get a statistically significant result in a relatively small amount of time. However, if you want to improve your content in more than one area, running independent tests on each variable takes a very long time and exposes your test runs to seasonal changes that may skew the results. This is where multivariate testing really shines.

What is multivariate testing?

In internet marketing, multivariate testing is a process by which multiple components of a website may be tested simultaneously and in a live environment. It can be thought of in simple terms as numerous split tests or A/B tests performed on one page at the same time. Multivariate testing is usually employed in order to ascertain which content or creative variation produces the best improvement in the defined goals (conversion rate) of a website. Dramatic increases can be seen through testing different copy text, form layouts and even landing page images and background colors. In a nutshell, multivariate testing can be seen as allowing website visitors to vote with their clicks for which content they prefer, the content that produces the greatest chance of them proceeding to a defined goal.

Multivariate testing is currently an area of high growth in internet marketing as it helps website owners to ensure that they are getting the most from the visitors arriving at their site. Areas such as search engine optimization and pay per click advertising bring visitors to a site and have been extensively used by many organizations, but multivariate testing allows internet marketers to ensure that visitors are being effectively served once they arrive at the website.

Multivariate testing expands upon simple A/B testing by comparing multiple variables at once. For example, if you have 2 versions of copy, 2 versions of images, and 2 different offers, you test all combinations simultaneously to see which performs the best. Testing multiple variables at once allows you to home in more quickly on the most effective content, as well as the areas that make the biggest impact. Using the same 2000 visits from above, results may look like this:

Content Version	Visits	Conversions	Conversion Rate
Copy A, Image A, Offer A	250	5	2%
Copy A, Image A, Offer B	250	10	4%
Copy A, Image B, Offer A	250	4	1.6%
Copy A, Image B, Offer B	250	9	3.6%
Copy B, Image A, Offer A	250	7	2.8%
Copy B, Image A, Offer B	250	12	4.8%
Copy B, Image B, Offer A	250	6	2.4%
Copy B, Image B, Offer B	250	11	4.4%

There is a lot more to analyze here, but upon inspection, we find that Offer B is much better than Offer A, Copy B is slightly better than Copy A, and Image B is slightly less effective than Image A.

Depending on how many combinations are tested, it may take a bit longer to generate statistically significant results than when running a single A/B test, but it will be far faster and more reliable than running a series of A/B tests covering the same combinations.

How do I track my A/B and multivariate tests in HitsLink?

Since an A/B test is essentially a multivariate test with only one variable, Hitslink Platinum supports both test types with the same interface. With HitsLink Platinum, users are responsible for managing their own content and assigning multivariate keys within the tracking script:

1. Create the various landing pages or content you wish to test.
2. Use the "Get Tracking Script" form to retrieve a new script with multivariate testing enabled. This exposes a new variable, the multivariate key, which you can use to identify each of your content combinations.
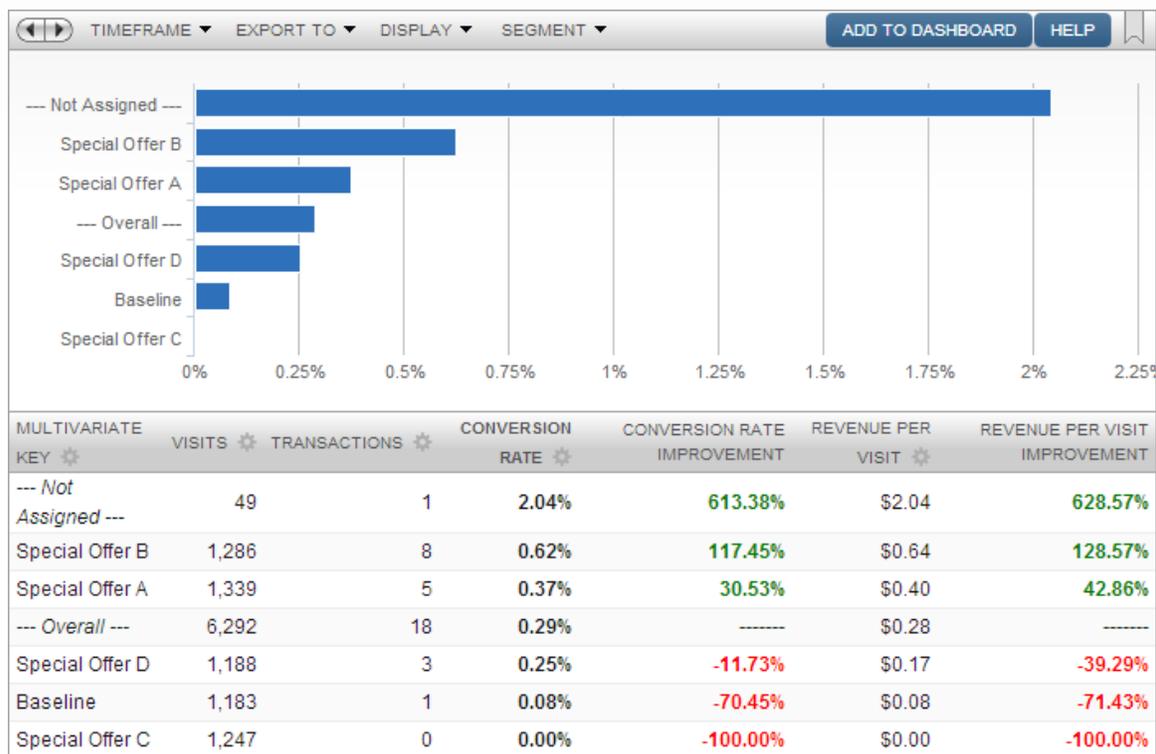
```
wa_MultivariateKey = ''; //Set this variable to perform multivariate testing
```

3. While rendering your page content, fill in this variable an appropriate value. The value you use will be attached to the visit. From this, conversion rates and other KPIs can be tracked.

   For example, to set a baseline page:
```
wa_MultivariateKey = 'Baseline';
```

When visitors load a page with the multivariate testing script, the multivariate key you used will be attached to their visit, allowing you to track conversion rates and other KPIs. Once the test content is deployed, you can compare the results in the Multivariate Report.

| ◄ ► | TIMEFRAME ▼ | EXPORT TO ▼ | DISPLAY ▼ | SEGMENT ▼ | ADD TO DASHBOARD | HELP |

MULTIVARIATE KEY ⚙	VISITS ⚙	TRANSACTIONS ⚙	CONVERSION RATE ⚙	CONVERSION RATE IMPROVEMENT	REVENUE PER VISIT ⚙	REVENUE PER VISIT IMPROVEMENT
--- *Not Assigned* ---	49	1	2.04%	613.38%	$2.04	628.57%
Special Offer B	1,286	8	0.62%	117.45%	$0.64	128.57%
Special Offer A	1,339	5	0.37%	30.53%	$0.40	42.86%
--- *Overall* ---	6,292	18	0.29%	--------	$0.28	--------
Special Offer D	1,188	3	0.25%	-11.73%	$0.17	-39.29%
Baseline	1,183	1	0.08%	-70.45%	$0.08	-71.43%
Special Offer C	1,247	0	0.00%	-100.00%	$0.00	-100.00%

The report will display a row for each multivariate key that has been visited, plus rows for "Overall" and "Not Assigned". "Overall" includes all account activity, and "Not Assigned" covers only visits without a multivariate key. The report displays improvement from "Overall".

In the example above, 5 keys have been assigned: "Baseline" and Special Offers A through D. As you can see, the "Not Assigned" pages are dramatically outperforming the baseline pages indicating that the original content provides the best conversion rate. This report can be customized and refined in a number of ways:

- Transaction Type – Select any individual transaction type to compare test results for any of your custom defined transactions.

- Segmentation Filter – Click on the "Segment" dropdown to examine results for specific market segments with our real-time dynamic segmentation filter. What is successful in one market may not be as effective in another.

- Optimize for a multitude of metrics – Only a handful of metrics are displayed here, but many more are available. Use our column editor to hide, show, and chart the data most relevant to you. See below for a screenshot of the column editor displaying all available metrics.

Column Editor ✕

Select which columns to display on this report:

Column	Display Value	Display Percentage	Chart	Use Secondary Axis
MultiVariate Key	☑	☐	☐	☐
Visits	☑	☐	☐	☐
Transactions	☑	☐	☐	☐
Revenue	☐	☐	☐	☐
Conversion Rate	☑	☐	☑	☐
Conversion Rate Improvement	☑	☐	☐	☐
Revenue Per Visit	☑	☐	☐	☐
Revenue per Visit Improvement	☑	☐	☐	☐
Page Views	☐	☐	☐	☐
Minutes per Visit	☐	☐	☐	☐
Pages per Visit	☐	☐	☐	☐
Bounces	☐	☐	☐	☐
Bounce Rate	☐	☐	☐	☐
New Visitors	☐	☐	☐	☐
New Visitor Rate	☐	☐	☐	☐
Repeat Visitors	☐	☐	☐	☐
Repeat Visitor Rate	☐	☐	☐	☐
Total Seconds on Site	☐	☐	☐	☐
Minutes Per Visit Improvement	☐	☐	☐	☐
Pages Per Visit Improvement	☐	☐	☐	☐

[OK] [Cancel]

You can compare conversion rates, revenue, minutes per visit, pages per visit, and several other KPIs.

Summary

Content optimization plays a vital role in improving your website's effectiveness, whether that means more conversions, more repeat visitors, or more time spent per visit. A/B and multivariate tests are valuable tools you can use to make sure your content is optimized for your specific goals. Once the tests are run, you need to make the most of the data. By combining your new content with the powerful features of HitsLink Platinum, you can discover the most effective content for every segment of your audience.

About Net Applications

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