

BOUNCE RATE

The rise of digital advertising solutions designed to deliver VINtenders (vehicle intenders) to automotive dealer Vehicle Details Pages can sometimes also result in the rise in a site's bounce rate. This white paper will address this topic by providing context to what bounce rates signify, how they should be interpreted and whether a high bounce rate could impact SEO efforts.

WHAT'S INSIDE

This guide on bounce rate was written to cover and give alternatives to the following questions:

- What is bounce rate?
- How should I evaluate bounce rate?
- Does Google use bounce rate to score SEM?
- What does bounce rate mean to LotLinx traffic?
- How can I improve my bounce rate from all sources?

Presented by



befoundonline
the art and science of digital marketing

HOW SHOULD I EVALUATE BOUNCE RATE VIA GOOGLE ANALYTICS?

First, bounce rate can vary widely from page to page. When reviewing bounce rate, it is important to review your strategically important pages first, such as lead generation pages, product pages, and shopping cart pages. Focusing on the analysis and improvement of these pages will help you to see the most strategic gains.

Regardless of the type of page being reviewed, though, it is important to remember to take other metrics into consideration, especially time on site. This will give important context to the bounce rate data for the page. In and of itself, high bounce rate is not a bad thing.

The main reason for this is the scenario of a particular page having a high bounce rate but also a reasonably high time on site. This could indicate that, while many users are leaving the page, they are also spending a lot of time engaged with the page in question. This situation is perfectly acceptable for a strategically important landing page, such as a lead generation page, a specific article shared on social media, or – in the case of LotLinx – a specific VDP page.

A dealer's VDP page that has both a high bounce rate and a high time on site indicates that a user came to that page with a specific intent and took their time reviewing the information on that page. By deeplinking from a LotLinx affiliate site, this indicates strong user intent to learn about a specific vehicle. By staying on a particular VDP for a long period of time – along with leaving – the assumption can be made that the user was engaged with the content, got what they were looking for, and eventually left.

DOES GOOGLE USE BOUNCE RATE TO DETERMINE SEO RANKINGS?

In a word, no.

First of all, Google has gone on record saying that it does not use Google Analytics data, such as bounce rate or time on site, to influence rank-

ing factors. The reason being, doing so would be unfair to website owners who choose to use another analytics platform – say, Omniture – as this would prevent them from having the appropriate data to make optimization decisions.

Second, in having bounce rate as an SEO ranking factor, the assumption is that this number is a gauge for how engaging and relevant the content on that page is. Ostensibly, an engaging page would have a low bounce rate while a more irrelevant page would have a higher bounce rate.

A page could be highly relevant, engaging, and have well written content and still have a high bounce rate and high time on site. For example, this could be a well-written blog post on a certain topic that the user was searching for. They spent a lot of time reading it and – once they finished – they left the site, as they found what they were looking for. This is also likely the case with dealer VDP pages. Further, different types of content will have drastically different bounce rates. A page optimized for lead generation will have a high bounce rate, as the page has a single intent: to collect leads, and nothing else. On the other hand, a video on YouTube.com will likely have a low bounce rate, as users will likely find related videos to watch once they have watched their initial video.

HOW SHOULD I EVALUATE BOUNCE RATE FROM LOTLINX VERSUS OTHER SOURCES OF TRAFFIC?

As previously mentioned, it is recommended that bounce rate and time spent be used in conjunction when evaluating traffic quality. For example, below is a screenshot from a LotLinx dealer customer's GA. The two traffic sources that are blackened out are the dealer's sites, which, as expected, have strong overall performance. In looking at LotLinx, listed in the fourth position, bounce rate is definitely higher than the site average. The average session duration for LotLinx visitors, however, is over 2 minutes – solid engagement illustrating that the visits were meaningful.

An additional factor to consider when reviewing bounce rate data is the type of traffic that's being generated. For example, paid search traffic – where you have greater control over the content and landing page – will likely have a low bounce rate and higher time on site (provided the campaign and landing page are well-targeted). Organic search, on the other hand, will likely have a wider variance in bounce rates and time-on-site, depending on the page's user experience, how engaging the content is, and the intent of the searcher.

Because LotLinx Deeplinking™ results in very targeted traffic sent directly to a dealer's VDP, it is likely that both bounce rate and time on site could be higher than non-paid sources, and your site average. The higher bounce rate results from the VDP being the final online destination for a car shopper before they make a buying decision – they may therefore have little reason to peruse the rest of the dealer's site. The higher time on site results from the user having a higher interest in the vehicle and reviewing all of the information on the VDP.

these types of sessions will begin to increase the overall bounce rate and decrease the average time on site. Metrics like these do not look good to dealers. How can this be remediated? The best way to create a more equitable view of VDP bounce rate and time on site is by creating a new segment in Google Analytics that only reports on sessions that have a time on site longer than 0 seconds. This will only report on sessions where Google was able to report on time on site. It will be a smaller set of data but the data will be more realistic.

To create this segment, follow these simple steps:

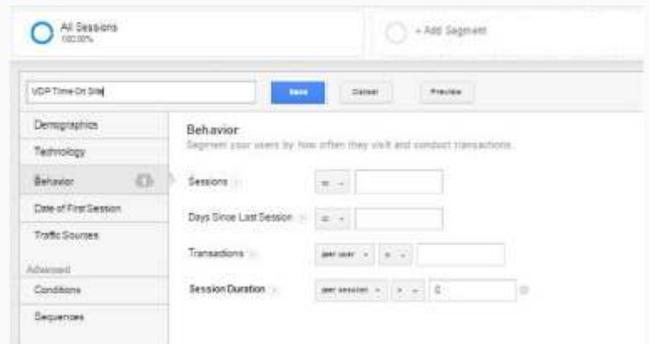
1. Click the 'Add a Segment' tile at the top of the page.
2. From the new dropdown box, click the 'New Segment' button.
3. Select the 'Behavior' section on the left-hand side of the menu.
4. On the 'Session Duration' field, ensure that you do the following:
 - a. Change 'Per User' to 'Per Session'
 - b. Select the Greater Than/> symbol.
 - c. Enter zero (0) into the number field.
5. Name the segment.
6. Click the 'Save' button.

Source	Acquisition			Behavior			Conversions		
	Sessions	% New Sessions	New Users	Bounce Rate	Pages / Session	Avg. Session Duration	Cost Conversion Rate	Cost Completion	Goal Value
	8,237	44.59%	2,781	39.19%	5.36	00:05:19	151.48%	9,448	\$0.00
1. [Redacted]	1,203	27.20%	344	52.30%	5.88	00:05:21	131.70%	1,862	\$0.00
2. m.facebook.com	1,162	62.01%	733	52.62%	2.83	00:01:11	123.43%	1,459	\$0.00
3. [Redacted]	662	0.00%	8	13.90%	7.97	00:12:38	201.81%	1,136	\$0.00
4. yahoo.yahoo.com	208	80.87%	241	54.30%	2.93	00:02:00	104.34%	491	\$0.00

I HEARD GOOGLE ANALYTICS CAN RUN INTO ISSUES WHEN TRACKING TIME ON SITE FOR SOME SINGLE VISIT SESSIONS?

This is correct.

When a user lands on a page, doesn't interact with it, and eventually leaves the website entirely, Google cannot measure the time on site. When this happens, Google attributes 0:00 time on site and a 100% bounce rate to this particular session. As this happens more and more,



WHAT CHANGES CAN DEALERS MAKE TO THEIR VDP PAGES THAT WILL HELP TO IMPROVE TIME-ON-SITE REPORTING?

As mentioned above, when users simply visit a page, don't interact with any elements, and ultimately leave the page, time on site is not collected. This can negatively skew the bounce rate and time on site associated with this URL. Luckily, there is a way around this, in the form of Google's "Event Tracking". This allows website owners to tag different objects on the page - such as when a user clicks a button or scrolls - and collect performance metrics based on this action.

When a user enters a page and starts interacting with different elements on the page, this helps Google know when to start and stop tracking time on site. Website owners can tag a variety of elements as an "Event", such as clicking a button, selecting an object, or even just starting to scroll around on the page. Imagine a dealer had given scrolling its own event tag. For example, when a user enters a page at 0:00, then starts scrolling at 0:01 and leaves the site at 5:01, Google knows that the time on site was 5:00 (5:01 page exit - 0:01 start scrolling).

By identifying one more events/objects that the dealer considers to be relevant to engagement, dealers can start to have a more accurate picture of the time on site for a broader segment of users.

OKAY, I HEAR WHAT YOU ARE SAYING, BUT I STILL WANT TO IMPROVE MY BOUNCE RATE FROM LOTLINX VISITS. ANY ADVICE?

Our experience is that there are many factors impacting the bounce rate from a Shopper that LotLinx sends to a VDP, some in our control, many out of our control. Examples include:

- **VDP design.** The information contained on a VDP as well as the page structure will signifi-

cantly impact bounce rate, and other key site metrics. CDK's study, "[The 2014 Inventory Shopping Experience](#)," noted that the majority of participants who landed on a dealer VDP judged the vehicle within the first few seconds. Similarly, the study showed a spike in VDP bounce rates when anything other than a vehicle image was top of page.

- **Page load time.** As impatient digital consumers, we all get frustrated when pages take longer to load than expected. Long page load times will result in both higher bounce rates and lower time on site metrics.

- **Market factors.** As a "sense and respond" advertising platform, activities across the LotLinx Shopper Targeting Platform can often be driven by a rise in online content, or marketing events. For example, there has been a significant amount of online content for the 2015 Dodge Challenger Hellcat SRT. With a supercharged V-8, it is the most powerful production car ever built by Chrysler. As favorable reviews for the car surfaced online, we noticed a rise in VIN views for dealer customers with Hellcats. After all, who wouldn't want to see real Hellcats on a dealer site? The reality is, however, that a new car with 7 more horsepower than the \$400,000 Lamborghini Aventador will always drive lookers, who will visit your VDPs and then move on, resulting in a high bounce rate.

In closing, we highly recommend that when evaluating bounce rate on your VDPs, you always pair that data with time spent to get a full picture of the real story.

And if you still don't like what you see, please call your account manager or our main line 800.625.LINX (5469).



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