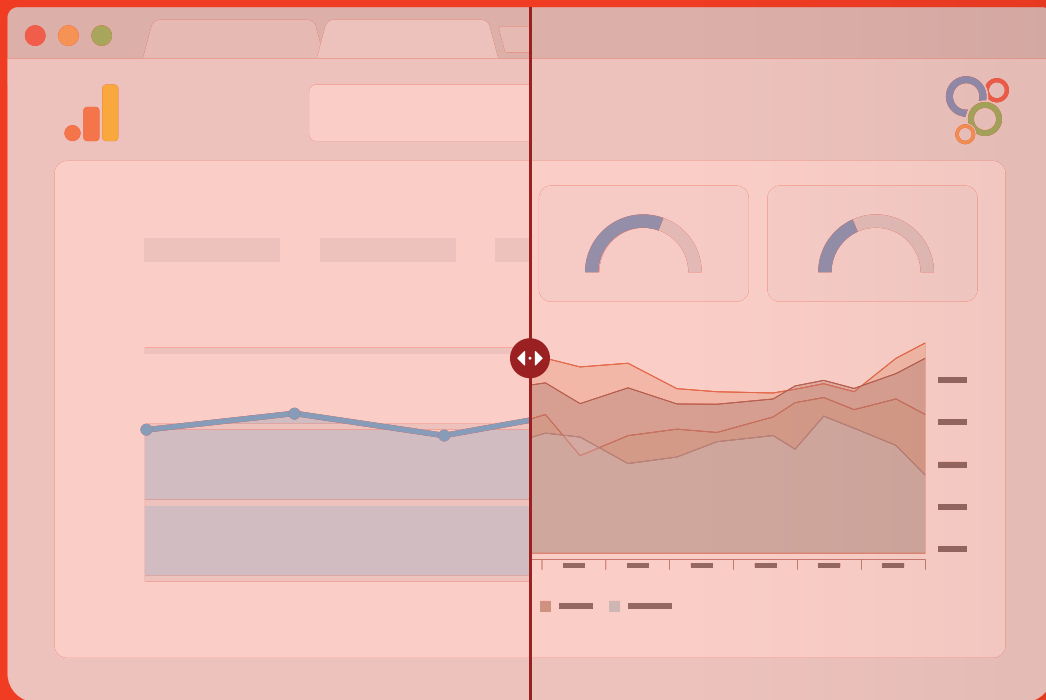


Campaign performance

and web analytics



Introduction

Marketers are confronted daily with huge amounts of data to analyse and monitor their online marketing campaigns. This data comes from different sources and when customers use their web analytics to verify our campaign data they may conclude that there are discrepancies between their data and our data. The differences are completely understandable as web analytics are complex matter. In this whitepaper we explain where these differences come from, why TradeTracker will more than likely track the results of affiliate campaigns more accurate than general analytics platforms like Google Analytics. And why these differences are inevitable.

1. Different systems, different outcomes

The key reason why tracking discrepancies arise, is that analytics platforms like Google Analytics and the TradeTracker platform are different; these systems are built on different definitions, different purposes and different methods. This is also the reason that Google Ads will report differently from Google Analytics even though both products are from the same company. So first, let's take a closer look at both systems.

1.1 Web analytics

Web analytics is the measurement and analysis of data to inform an understanding of user behaviour across web pages. Analytics platforms measure activity and behaviour on a website, for example: how many users visit, how long they stay, how many pages they visit, which pages they visit, and whether they arrive by following a link or not. Google Analytics is one of the most used analytics platforms which uses tracking parameters, known as "UTM tags": a snippet of text you can attach to the end of a URL in order to track a source, medium, and campaign name. When you attach a UTM tag to a URL, Google Analytics will tell you where your visitors are coming from and what campaign brought them to your site. For example:

```
https://www.example.com/?site=n&utm_source=tradetracker&utm_medium=affiliate&utm_campaign=1
```

Google analytics reports fully after a 72 hour processing window.



1.2 The TradeTracker platform

TradeTracker offers detailed and transparent information that is specifically tailored to optimally run and evaluate affiliate marketing campaigns. TradeTracker measures customer interactions with publishers on the affiliate network during the whole online buying process: from the initial click on an affiliate website, for example a blog, to clicks on other affiliate websites like for instance a comparison site to the final transaction on the Merchants’ website. The measurement of impressions, clicks, leads and sales transactions depends not only on raw data, but also on extensive campaign rules and settings chosen by the Merchant.

TradeTracker uses four different methods to track conversions. If one method fails, TradeTracker will match the next available tracking method. If a user deletes or blocks cookies for example, TradeTracker will still be able to track this users’ actions although Google Analytics will not be able to attribute these actions to the right source.

TradeTracker reports realtime for your chosen conversion window.



2. Different definitions and conditions

Comparing statistics gets difficult as TradeTracker counts unique clicks where Google Analytics counts sessions. TradeTracker applies campaign rules to their reports like not allowing specific affiliates, where Google Analytics doesn't have such settings (or advertisers would have to setup a blacklist for every publisher manually). Also the tracking window may differ in both systems. The tracking window is the length of time during which the TradeTracker software tracks a click-through from a publisher’s website. Any sales made during this period are recognised as commissions in the advertiser dashboard.

2.1 Clicks and sales (TradeTracker)

See Figure 1. Raw **clicks** are all clicks registered by TradeTracker within the selected date range. When running a Cost per Click campaign TradeTracker accounts unique clicks: for every unique visitor only 1 click per hour is accounted as a valid CPC conversion.

Affiliate site 	Impressions		Clicks			Sales
	# raw	Commission	# raw	# unique 	Commission	#
Publisher 	0	-	27,855	27,537	-	16,799
Publisher 	0	-	17,140	10,496	-	4,184
Publisher 	0	-	6,064	5,268	-	2,924
Publisher 	0	-	7,803	4,252	-	2,214
Publisher 	0	-	3,086	2,577	-	1,397
Publisher 	0	-	4,149	2,086	-	749
Publisher 	0	-	3,345	1,488	-	690

Figure 1: TradeTracker campaign report



Sales transactions are all transactions that can be matched by TradeTracker with a click from a specific user on an affiliate website to the merchant site. A match will be successful under the following conditions:

- The transaction is measured inside the tracking window;
- The IP address which originated the transaction is not excluded by TradeTracker;
- The campaign is online (within the campaign period);
- The affiliate is accepted by the merchant.

A transaction gets triggered by a conversion script which is placed on the checkout success page of the merchant. TradeTracker reports conversions against the date/time of the successful action.

Conversions can be counted multiple times as long there is a minimum of 90 seconds between triggering the same sales script.

2.2 Users, sessions and goals (Google Analytics)

Google Analytics shows Users, New Users and Sessions. A **session** is defined as a group of user interactions with your website that take place within a given time frame (standard 30 minutes). For example a single session can contain multiple page views, events, social interactions, and ecommerce transactions. After 30 minutes automatically a new session will be recorded. So if a user clicks on your ad twice within thirty minutes without closing his or her browser, this is registered by Analytics as one session, even if the user left your site and then returned shortly after. **Users** are defined as ‘users who have initiated at least one session during the date range’, **new users** represent the number of first-time users during the selected date range.

In Analytics you can configure **Goals** or use Ecommerce Transactions to count conversions. Goals can be defined as a Pageview, Event, or interaction such as Time on Site. Each Goal in Analytics can only be counted once per session. Unlike goals **transactions** can be counted multiple times in a session provided each session has a unique transaction ID.



	Source ?	Acquisition		
		Users ? ↓	New Users ?	Sessions ?
		3,150 % of Total: 4.47% (70,498)	2,075 % of Total: 3.48% (59,543)	4,577 % of Total: 3.52% (130,061)
☐	1. Publisher	825 (25.28%)	303 (14.60%)	1,342 (29.32%)
☐	2. Publisher	351 (10.75%)	296 (14.27%)	411 (8.98%)
☐	3. Publisher	216 (6.62%)	191 (9.20%)	243 (5.31%)
☐	4. Publisher	196 (6.00%)	143 (6.89%)	259 (5.66%)

Figure 2: Google Analytics report

2.3 Campaign rules

Merchants choose which affiliates are allowed to join their campaign. Clicks or transactions from affiliates who are not allowed for a campaign will not be counted by our system. On the side of the merchant however these clicks and transactions may still be counted, which may result in the merchant measuring more clicks and transactions than TradeTracker.

All: 9999

Accepted: 999

On hold: 0

Under evaluation: 5

Cancelled: 44

Rejected: 999

	Campaign ▲	Affiliate site	Market segment	Site type
☐	✓ Campaign	Publisher	Daily offers a...	Coupon/Voucher...
☐	✓ Campaign	Publisher	Other	Comparison sit...
☐	✓ Campaign	Publisher	Entertainment ...	Content publis...
☐	✓ Campaign	Publisher	Personal inter...	Content publis...

Figure 3: TradeTracker affiliate report



2.4 Tracking window

Each campaign has its own tracking window. For some reason, an advertiser may have set a smaller tracking window than TradeTracker in Google Analytics. When a transaction is made outside of the Google Analytics window after the initial click on an affiliate website but within the TradeTracker tracking window, our system will accept this transaction. Google Analytics on the other hand may not assign this transaction to TradeTracker.

3. Attribution differences

Most advertisers measure the success of their online advertising on a “last click” basis. This means they give all the credit for a conversion to the last-clicked ad and corresponding keyword. However, this ignores the other ad interactions customers may have had along the way.

Let’s say the customer journey starts with a user reading a blog and clicking on a TradeTracker ad that leads to the advertiser’s website where the user subscribes to the advertiser’s newsletter (see figure 4). The next day, the user is still interested in the product and tries to compare prices and details on a comparison website affiliated with TradeTracker. The other day, the user receives a newsletter from the advertiser, clicks to the website and makes a purchase.

Analytics will attribute the transaction to the internal newsletter because that’s where the last click comes from. By default, TradeTracker will attribute the conversion to the TradeTracker campaign as the system finds a match between a click initiated by TradeTracker and a transaction from the same user.

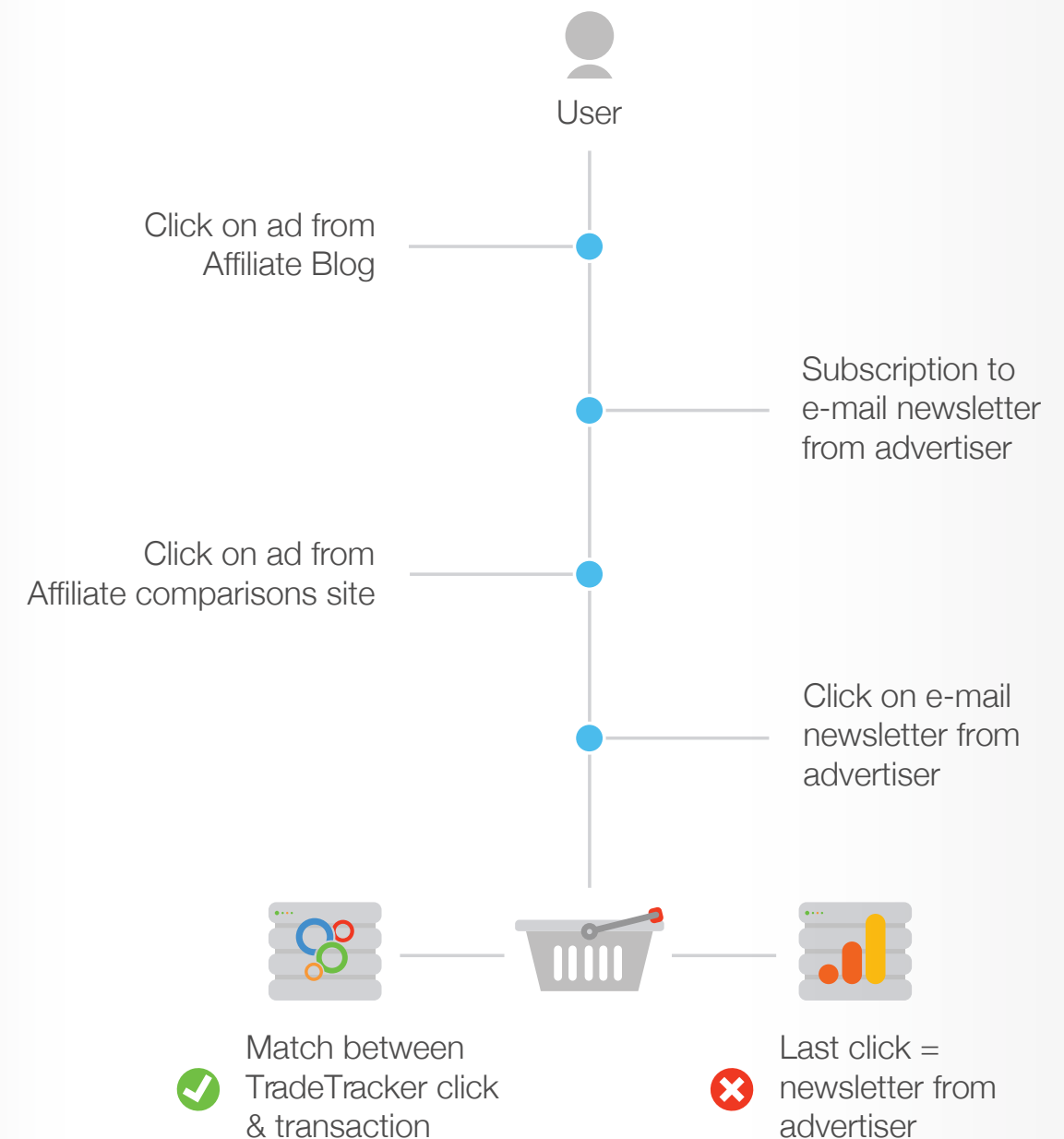


Figure 4: Example conversion path



4. Implementation of the tracking script

To enable TradeTracker to track transactions, merchants need to fire a script from TradeTracker on their checkout success page. Incorrect implementation of this script may cause discrepancies between Merchants' analytics and tracking data from TradeTracker. Ensure that your web hosting servers are functioning properly, the page is loading for all possible users and IPs, and the tracking code is installed correctly on your web pages.

4.1 Conditional conversion tracking scripts

Sometimes the TradeTracker script will be fired conditionally by means of a cookie-based method. On the checkout success page the merchant placed an additional script which checks if a cookie is available that identifies TradeTracker as a source for this transaction. If so, the merchant fires the tracking script from TradeTracker. But the cookie gets lost when:

- Users browse incognito
- Users block cookies (with ad blocking software)
- Users delete their cookies (periodically)

In these cases transactions will still be made, but as the TradeTracker tracking script doesn't get fired these transactions will not be visible in TradeTrackers' reports.

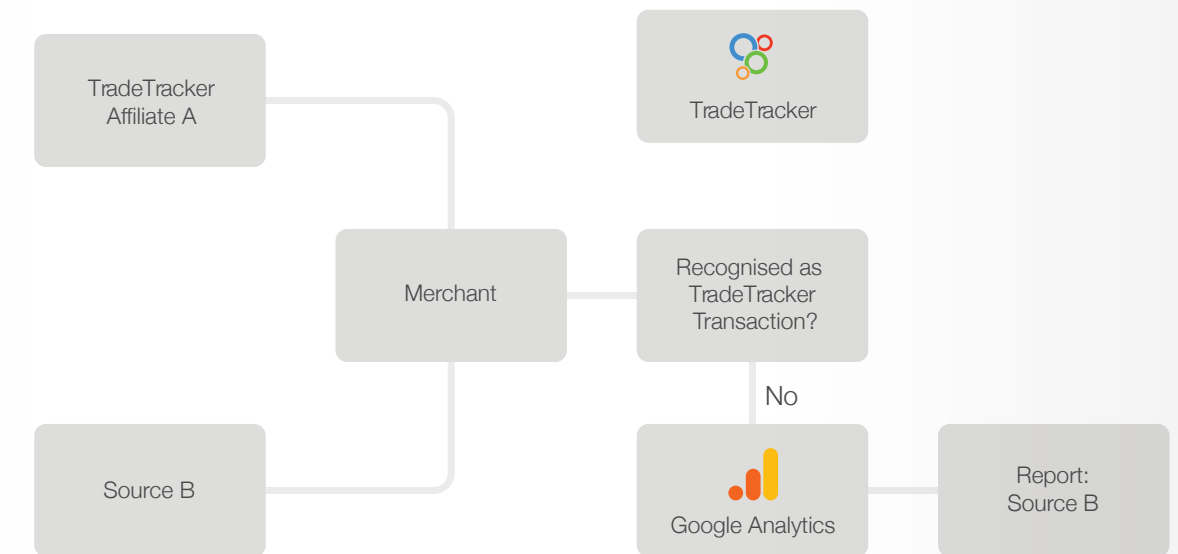


Figure 5: conditional script

4.2 De-duplication without using a fallback method

This scenario (see figure 5) also applies if a merchant is de-duplicating between networks and does not implement a fallback tracking method which is imperative.

De-duplication

When two or more networks are involved in promoting a campaign, users may be redirected to the merchants website by TradeTracker, but also by another network. Transactions will be de-duplicated by transaction ID and assigned to the network who provided the last click. Information on who provided the last click will be derived from a cookie.

Fallback method

If a cookie isn't found (because it got deleted or blocked somehow), the conversion script should be triggered either way so that at a later stage the transaction can still be assessed within the interface.

It's common for the merchant to append a small code to the transactionID (e.g. _FB) when a cookie isn't found. In this way these types of fallback transactions are easily spotted within the interface, making it easy for a merchant to cross-reference this transaction with other networks and assessing manually based on click time or using another predefined method.



5. Implementation of Google Analytics

If the landing page for your ads is not being tracked, your campaign information is not passed to Analytics. Ensure that you are tracking all landing pages for your TradeTracker ads. Also be sure that you send the correct UTM codes to your accountmanager at TradeTracker. However, these tags can be lost in a redirect , for example when the visitor is redirected from the desktop version to a mobile version of the website.

6. Users preferences

Users entering your website through TradeTracker might have JavaScript or images turned off, or might use other technologies preventing Analytics from reporting about your website users (such as by installing the Analytics opt-out browser add-on). In some cases, Analytics might not be able to report these users, but they are reported through TradeTracker.

7. Conclusions

TradeTracker and web analytics platforms will report different data due to:

- Different definitions, conditions and attribution policies;
- Incorrect implementation or absence of parameters like UTM codes;
- Lost UTM codes caused by redirects;
- Incorrect implementation of web analytics on the landing page / checkout success page;
- Incorrect implementation of TradeTracker tracking code on the checkout success page;
- Users preferences like browsing with software that blocks Google Analytics.

If you are having issues with data discrepancies, ask your TradeTracker account manager and he / she will check for possible causes and cooperate with you to ensure the campaign runs correctly on all sides. TradeTracker provides transparent and detailed data for every transaction like the exact timestamp, the related browser data and IP address. However, as web analytic reports and TradeTracker reports are different systems some differences can't be avoided.

For a successful relationship with our affiliated websites it is important that their promotional efforts are rewarded fairly and with trust. Let's foster this relationship to get the most out of your marketing campaigns!



8. Advice for minimizing differences

Here is a checklist with steps that you can take to minimize measuring differences between TradeTracker and your own web analytics platform:

- ☐ Send the correct tracking parameters (UTM codes) to your accountmanager;
- ☐ Here are 3 tips for creating parameters (UTM codes):
 - Prefer dashes over underscores, percentage (representation for spaces inside Google Analytics) and plus signs in your URLs. Google algorithm doesn't penalize you for using them and they work better;
 - Stay consistent with lowercase throughout all of your campaigns. For example, **utm_source=TradeTracker** is different from **utm_source=tradetracker** Changing to uppercase, camel case or any other capitalization gives you an additional responsibility of remembering this convention. So, it's better to stick with lowercase and not let human error creep in;
 - keep your parameters clean, descriptive, non-redundant and easy to read.
- ☐ Make sure Google Analytics is properly implemented on your website
- ☐ Make sure that the TradeTracker scripts are implemented correctly on your website
 - For tracking clicks, create a redirect folder and upload our index file;
 - For tracking conversions, modify your checkout success / order confirmation page;
 - You will find detailed instructions on:
[https://sc.tradetracker.net/implementation/overview?f\[id\]=1](https://sc.tradetracker.net/implementation/overview?f[id]=1)
- ☐ Check that your campaign settings are aligned with TradeTracker, so that the tracking window (i.e. the cookie expiration date) is the same.

