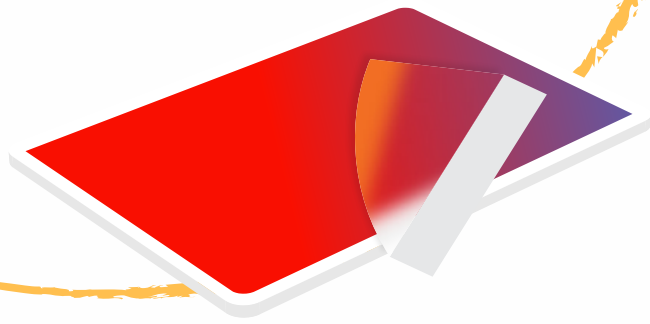




How to select the right marketing analytics solution.

Now's the time to make the move.



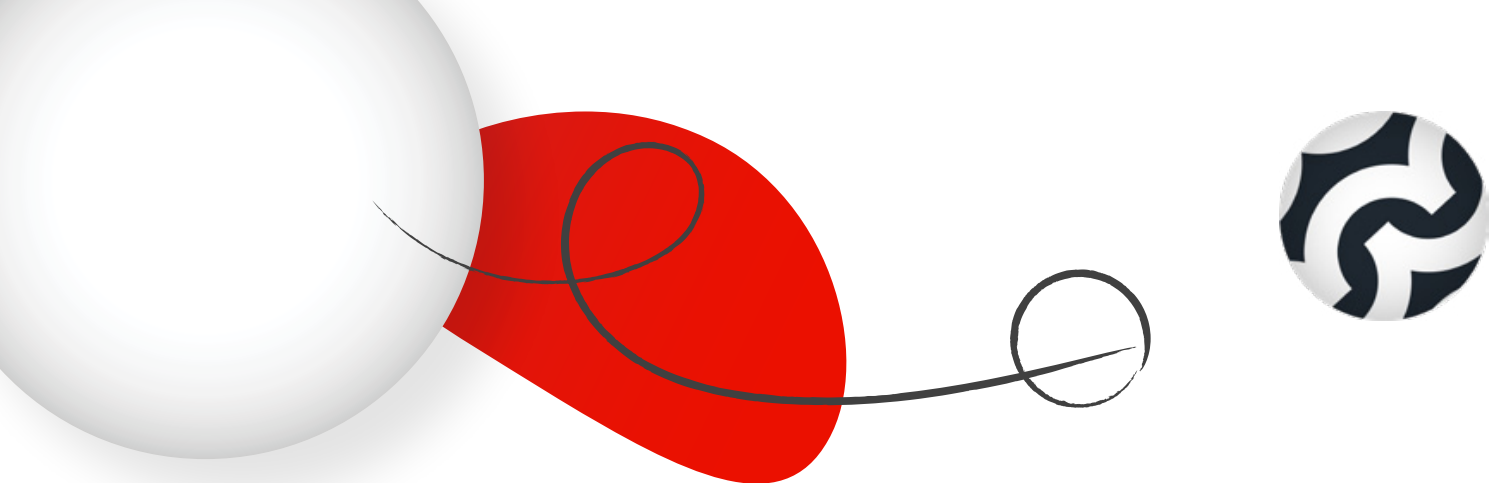


Universal Analytics is retiring, which will force users out and onto a new platform. And after that, your historical data may live in a CSV file, deep data lake, or resolve in Big Query which requires SQL knowledge to retrieve and stitch together to make sense of. Many organisations will need to consider the impact this may have on resources and customer insights. That's why now's the perfect time to learn what to look for when it comes to choosing analytics solution for the future, that grows with you, and always keeps you top of mind.

Data powers everything you do. More and more organisations are looking to marketing analytics as a system of intelligence that adds greater value to the individual components of their marketing stack. Whether it's experience optimisation, audience segmenting, or other marketing activities, the capabilities in a robust marketing analytics solution can create a multiplier effect that enables marketers to maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of everything they do. Every organisation is at a different point in their ability to leverage marketing analytics capabilities, as well as their familiarity with relevant requirements and capabilities to look for in a marketing analytics solution.

Wherever you are in your marketing analytics journey, investing in a new solution is an important decision that will have significant short-term and long-term impacts on your marketing efforts. Reaching the best decision for your organisation will take considerable time and effort that will likely involve you engaging in substantial research and evaluation.

To help you in that process, this guide covers some of the most important questions you should ask and issues you should investigate. It provides tips for navigating the information and targeted marketing you'll encounter to help you make informed, objective assessments of the solutions you evaluate.



Integrating data collection

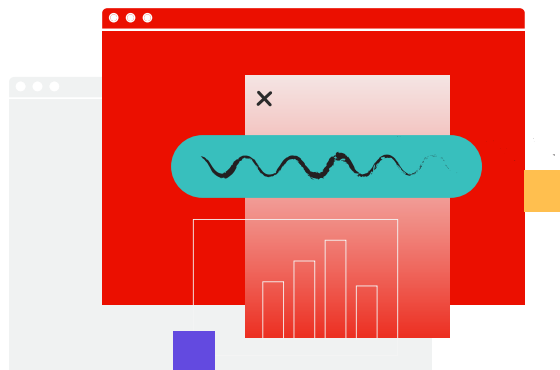
The tools you use from different vendors collect, store, and format data in their own ways, creating silos when it comes to analysing it. The marketing analytics tool you ultimately choose must have the ability to stitch those disjointed pieces of data, so that you can get a view of the entire customer journey to analyse and understand data points impacting customer experience. That means more than just being able to use remarketing data. It means being able to gather data from all the channels where your customers engage with you, such as web, mobile, social media, call centres, in-store interactions, digital assistants, surveys, kiosks, rewards programs, and more.

For example, if an online retailer only has access to a customer's web traffic behaviour, they might identify a customer browsing a children's doll collection and use that insight to inform their ongoing marketing and advertising to that person. But perhaps the customer's daughter just had a birthday and those particular searches were one-time events.

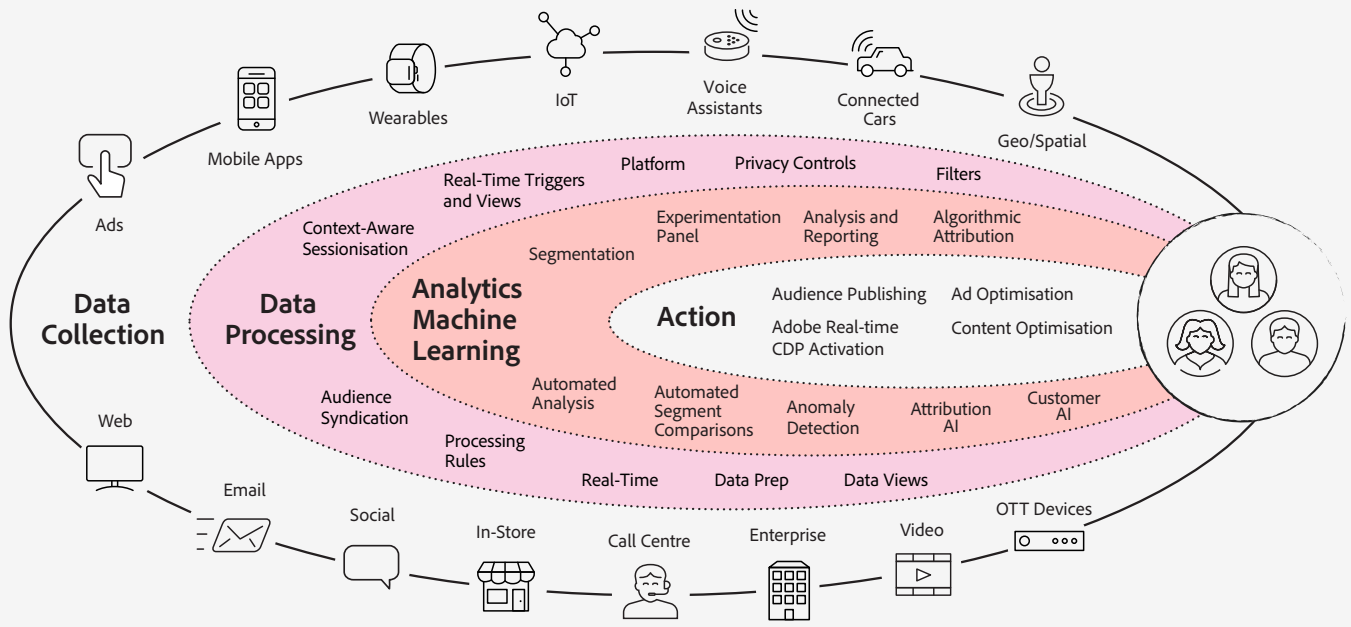
► GOOD TO KNOW:

Some marketing analytics solutions not only have limits on the data sources they can draw from, but they have limited or no ability to share insights with downstream solutions.

If the retailer continues to base all of its personalisation efforts on that information, not only will it end up annoying the customer, it will waste time and money on personalisation that is no longer relevant. But if a marketing analytics solution can bring in data from other sources—such as previous purchasing history from the retailer's loyalty program or surveys—it can create a clearer, more accurate picture of who the customer is and what they're interested in at that moment.



Data to value



Bringing meaningful form to data

Once your disparate data is integrated, it needs to be normalised in order to be usable. This can be difficult since data from different sources often has its own unique data formats or schemas. This creates challenges for presenting that data in consistent data models or customer profiles that allow you to perform holistic analysis. When you're only able to analyse each data set individually, you lack the ability to understand combined context and see the complete picture.

For example, a solution that focuses primarily on analysing site traffic might also allow you to analyse advertising data. But too often such solutions only provide an individual analysis report on each set of data rather than illustrating the correlation between advertising and site traffic, including the impact advertising has on the behaviour of various audiences regarding macro-conversion events (like purchase) instead of micro-events (like click-through rate).

To avoid disjointed data analysis, your marketing analytics solution needs to be able to perform free-form dimensional analysis. Simply put, dimensional analysis allows you to break down and analyse your data sets in context with other data sets. So when you analyse your website data, you can layer in your advertising or email campaign data to understand the overall success of the campaign in terms of product orders.

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

Can the marketing analytics solution collect data from all of the sources that matter to my business, and will it be able to collect data from emerging sources in the future? Does the solution integrate multi-channel data at the customer level for analysis?

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

Can the solution create an analysis report that impacts how findings from one data set impacts the findings of other types of data sets?

This is achieved by aggregating and normalising data sets in a way that temporarily transforms them from diverse schemas into a common, customer-based schema that can be viewed and analysed in a more meaningful, useful way.

It's also important to find a solution with the ability to non-destructively process and manipulate data so it can be used in a variety of outputs. Some solutions only offer fixed outputs with constraints on the definition of certain data attributes.

▶ GOOD TO KNOW:

Some organisations have built their own data lakes and might also be considering trying to build their own marketing analytics engine and processes. Internally engineering your own marketing analytics capabilities is a complex, time consuming effort that can not only overburden IT, but jeopardise your ability to perform meaningful data analyses and respond in real time to marketing requests.

▶ GOOD TO KNOW:

Some solutions might have AI capabilities, but aren't designed to actually analyse data from all your different marketing channels, limiting your ability to get insights on the full customer experience, to perform meaningful data analyses and respond in real time to marketing requests.

For example, when you define a timeout window for a user session, the solution might require that you apply that definition to all your channels. Setting it for 30 minutes might be fine for web sessions, but it won't make sense for mobile sessions that need a much shorter window. Instead, it's best if the solution allows you to create virtual reports where you can dynamically modify attributes and definitions in a way that makes sense for different channels and circumstances.

Leveraging artificial intelligence

Organisations collect staggering amounts of data to help them better understand their customers. While all of that data is essential to targeting audience segments and personalising the customer journey, there's simply too much of it for humans to process on their own. Machine learning and artificial intelligence (AI) are critical elements of any marketing analytics solution, because they enable you to surface insights from the seemingly never-ending streams of data that pour into your business every day. While you shouldn't expect AI to take the place of all human involvement, it can save significant analysis time and surface new insights by detecting anomalies and causal factors that you might miss, as well as facilitate audience segment building. In short, it can make the unknown known.

AI analytics capabilities



Algorithmic Attribution



Segment Compare



Contribution Analysis



Audience Clustering



Anomaly Detection



Propensity Scoring



Segment IQ / Journey IQ



Intelligent Alerts

That said, a solution's AI needs to be usable by the intended users so you can take advantage of it in the moments that matter. Some marketing analytics solution vendors pride themselves in the high-powered sophistication of their tools, but they are likely only usable by hard core data scientists. Others claim to have AI that does all your thinking for you—just feed in your data and it magically spits out the answers you need. That's not the way AI works.

For Example - one of the most challenging aspects of marketing is to identify new opportunities in a timely fashion: What elements of customer behavior reflect challenges to the customer experience? Which of those represent opportunities to solve customer problems, reinforce desired behaviour, or capitalise on an emerging pattern? Marketeers require a user friendly way to answer just such questions without getting into the technical complexities of AI/ML.

Typical anomalies marketers need to investigate include unusual spikes or drops in average order value, trial registrations, or video buffer events. One shouldn't have to decide beforehand what anomalies to look for. Marketeers need to have a solution that finds it for them, so that they can discover potential issues and opportunities that they would never have known about had they been using manually driven analytical techniques.

While there's a lot to look for and expect from AI in a marketing analytics solution, vendor claims don't always match reality. To make sure you really get what you want and need, have the vendor demonstrate how your end users can actually take advantage of the AI, and how the AI delivers on each of the critical aspects discussed.

Performing freeform analysis

Many marketing analytics solutions have a very rigid reporting structure that is unintuitive and cumbersome to navigate. This can severely limit the types of analysis you are able to perform and the ways you are able to report on data. You may be limited by the fixed parameters offered in the solution's custom report builder, as well as by your understanding of the tool's complex set of rules. That's often the equivalent of trying to fit a square peg into a round hole.

Solutions with freeform analysis provide a more flexible, extensible option that allows almost any user to easily explore data and insights in a virtually unlimited fashion. Freeform analysis lets you drag and drop different data dimensions, metrics, segments, and time granularities to find immediate answers to questions. The ad hoc nature of freeform analysis can simplify the process of building concise customer segments that you can then compare to quickly identify insights and opportunities.

▶ GOOD TO KNOW:

Don't mistake visualisation tools for freeform analysis. Visualisation tools can help you view data, but they won't surface insights on the follow up questions you will inevitably have. Freeform analysis is built into an analytics tool to make analysis and insight generation easier and in real time.

One of the main goals of freeform analysis is to make it easier for more people to make data-driven decisions. That means, no matter their job or role, they'll be less prone to making faulty decisions due to guesswork. Another major outcome of freeform analysis is that it enables self-service analysis. If your organisation has a team of highly skilled analysts, most of their time is likely spent fulfilling report requests for others in the organisation. Self-service analysis frees up those analysts' time to do the value-added work they're paid for, while enabling marketers and executives to get the answers they need right away.

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

How easily does the solution allow users to pivot data, structure and segment data, and break data down across all funnel stages in order to find meaningful insights?

Does the solution run anomaly detection and flag outlier data automatically? Does it provide a simple way to dig into a data point and identify causal factors?

Taking action

The insights marketing analytics solutions provide can have a dramatic impact on your marketing efforts, but only if those insights are truly actionable. For example, when analysis indicates the winner of an A/B test, you don't need to wait for a meeting the next day to decide whether or not you should deploy the optimal experience. Your optimisation solution should be able to automatically activate the experience based on marketing analytics data.

Likewise, your marketing analytics solution should be able to help you build segments based on data from your advertising demand-side platform. It should also be able to help you optimise campaigns as you reach out to customers through all the different touchpoints of their journey. In other words, the marketing analytics solution should interact with the different technologies in your marketing stack to trigger events and actions based on discovered insights.

And it should be able to implement those actions at the optimal time based on the likes, dislikes, behaviors, and attitudes of the targeted audience segment. These automations empower your marketing analytics solution to add exponential value not only to the existing technologies in your marketing stack, but to the solutions you will add in the future. The ability to take action on insights and data requires the marketing analytics solution to provide outputs that can be readily ingested by your customer-facing technologies. Essentially, it needs to support two-way integrations. Native integrations generally provide the most seamless capabilities, but at minimum you should be able to take advantage of pre-built data connectors or APIs that support automation and live, real-time sharing.

The greater the depth and breadth of integrations, the better. For example, if you settle for a solution that can only act on ad data within its own ad network, you prevent yourself from being able to automatically take action across multiple engagement points in the customer journey.

In addition to delivering actionable data insights to your marketing technologies, your solutions need to make those insights available to the business. Be sure to explore what features the solution offers in terms of dashboarding, reporting, and customisation. How easily does it make that data available and digestible to any stakeholder within your organisation?

Can it present the information in tailored workspaces so individuals can easily see what they want or need to see, without being overwhelmed with data they don't care about? Be wary of complex user interfaces. The solution should be able to surface advanced functionality in a way that is easy to use, understand, and manipulate.

► GOOD TO KNOW:

Some vendors claim to have an integrated marketing stack, but in reality they have disjointed technologies that have yet to be integrated in a way that allows actioning on analytics data. Always ask for a demo to verify what the solution can actually deliver.

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

**How does the marketing analytics solution facilitate your ability to take action on the insights it provides?
Does it have robust integrations with customer-facing technology to automate action, or does it require manual intervention?**

Recognised marketing analytics leader

Marketing analytics plays an ever-expanding role in providing essential context to the customer journey and delivering actionable insights that impact all of your engagement points. The success or failure of an organisation's efforts to gain that customer context and act on those insight rests largely upon its investment in marketing analytics and its relationship with the marketing analytics provider.



To learn more about what Adobe Analytics can do for your business, visit <https://business.adobe.com/au/products/analytics/adobe-analytics.html>

Named a Leader in “The Forrester Wave™: Digital Intelligence Platforms” and in “The Forrester Wave™: Customer Analytics”, Adobe Analytics delivers on all the key marketing analytics elements covered in this buyer’s guide. It empowers marketers to easily collect and process data from nearly any online source. With its powerful yet approachable AI and freeform analysis, it makes it easy to create a complete picture of your customers and analyse their behaviours across their entire journey. As an integral part of Adobe Experience Cloud and with its robust third-party marketing integrations, it gives you the ability to automatically take action on insights and data so you can get more value from your marketing investments and be more effective in all your marketing efforts, especially in the moments that matter most.

