

Research: Competitive Landscape

Hey this is Eric from BuzzSumo, and today we want to focus on answering an important question-- one you should always ask yourself before you write a new piece of content.

How intense is the competition?

To create the best content, you need to research how much information is already available to your audience. This will help you determine whether the topic area is saturated or unsaturated

Saturated topic areas are defined by heavy competition or lots of existing content. This means that reader interest is spread very thin.

Unsaturated topics feature less content or less competition. This means that interest in each piece of content tends to be higher among the readers.

How saturated your topic area is will help you define your content strategy.

First we need to compare the number of posts, with the number of average and total shares. We can then observe if the volume of content and/or shares is increasing or decreasing.

To start enter your topic in most shared. Scroll through the results to ensure they line up with what you expect. (If you need help in designing search strings check out our video on running advanced searches.)

Once you've locked in your search, select content analysis from the navigation menu and run a report. The summary at the top shows the number of articles in your topic area and the average shares. Just below is the trend chart. This chart helps you gauge the level of audience interest as well as how much competition you have for their attention.

In our example publishing volume is very high--at least 6,000 posts per month. At the same time, we see average shares are declining. It's safe to say this content landscape is saturated.

Does this mean we should avoid producing content for this topic? Not necessarily. But, it does mean we need to be more thoughtful about the types of content we produce.

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We should avoid producing content that's generic and instead focus on high-value pieces, such as original research video or interactive content. We could also look for more specific or related topics, or we could specify a social network where shares are increasing more than the average. Saturated landscapes also generally require content amplification, including paid promotion. We'll talk more about this in the amplification module

Unsaturated content landscapes are different. They feature topics with low content volume and/or increasing interest. Average shares are one way to evaluate this interest, but you can also rely on your own knowledge or a tool like Google Trends.

In this search you can see that average shares are increasing and the volume of content is still relatively low. This landscape is unsaturated.

In an unsaturated content market, we need to create excellent content quickly. We should publish a mix of content, such as lists, how to's, videos, and why posts, and what posts. But remember the content should provide value to the readers.

If there's no clear leader in the topic area, we have an opportunity to become the expert.

So to recap:

1. Research the competitive landscape anytime you're writing about a new topic or industry or for a new client.
2. Determine if the market is saturated or unsaturated and adjust your content strategy accordingly now it's time to dive into our topics and competitors.