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Mystery Shopping with Web Automation Collecting Market Data in Non-Life Insurance

Challenges

In the tough competition between insurers, the market premium for the insurance products they offer is a key determinant of their success in the marketplace. Increasingly price-sensitive consumers are choosing their insurance cover by price or by the savings they can make compared with the competition. The growing popularity of comparison calculators on the internet as a result is raising the pressure on pricing. Benchmarking, controlling and rate assessing for a new pricing release depend both on internal data and on market data from competitors. Given the complexity of insurance rates – especially in auto insurance – collecting this data is a time-consuming and costly process. That is why the search is on for suitable ways of gathering data.

A possible solution may be offered as the online channel becomes more established and rate calculators are made more readily available on the internet as a result – both by insurers and through aggregators. Working with the corresponding rate calculators, it is possible to use engineered policyholder profiles, ideally ones that are representative of existing customers, to ascertain competitor premiums and, where applicable, their components.

Method

Given the high number of inquiries that have to be made, gathering data using online rate calculators only makes sense if the process is automated. The main benefits of automation over manual input are faster data retrieval, the possibility of repeating inquiries cost-neutrally, and what tends to be better quality. At the same time, automated data collection is not without its challenges. Primarily, they include the initial cost and effort of creating the scripts that make web automation possible, and ongoing maintenance. Processing errors may also go unnoticed, and it is not always possible to guarantee full automation. However, as long as these challenges are taken on board from the beginning, automated data collection can help to make substantial cost and time savings.

Synpulse has experience of this kind of web automation and works with the iMacros tool from iOpus software in its projects. First, the tool is used to program individual scripts which record the interaction with the rate calculator. When the script is executed, the necessary input data is transferred from a database of available policyholder profiles and entered in the relevant fields of the rate calculator to run the inquiry. The premium calculated on the basis of the entered profile is sent back to the database and saved. The inquiry is repeated automatically according to the number of profiles.

Procedure

A project for data collection with web automation can be broken down into various work packages. Synpulse supports its clients for the entire project duration. The relevant phases are as follows:

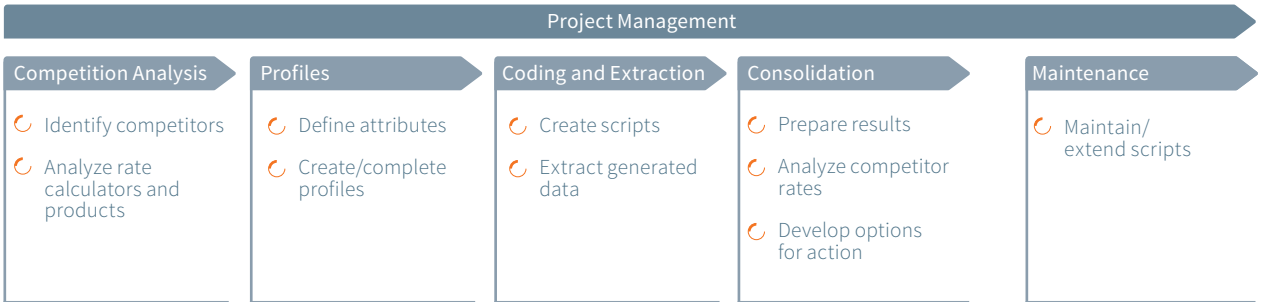
- The first task is to identify the relevant competitors based on corporate/pricing strategy. Then the available rate calculators and the products offered by the identified insurers are analyzed.
- The second step is to define and compile the attributes the competitor's rate calculator needs to calculate the premium. The policyholder's personal information and the coverage details must be defined here. These attributes are the basis on which either existing profiles are extended or new ones created.
- In the third phase, the individual scripts for the rate calculators and aggregators are programmed. Using the profiles created earlier, the actual data extraction now takes place. Synpulse has extensive experience in this field and provides these services from the nearshore location in Bratislava.
- The scope of the concluding consolidation phase of the project depends on the client's requirements. Following

preparation of the results, competitor rates can be analyzed using existing tools (MarketMap) and processes. It is also possible at this stage to develop options for action for the pricing strategy.

- Independently of the different project phases, it is important that the scripts are subsequently maintained on a regular basis. Changes in behavior, new website layouts or added attributes to rate calculators can mean that existing scripts no longer run entirely without errors and may fail to generate price data.

Benefit

Mystery shopping with web automation is a convenient way to gather competitor data for pricing purposes. From purely consolidating price data to developing options for possible action, Synpulse offers a holistic approach to support the insurance pricing process.



Source: Synpulse

Example Project Procedure