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eMarketing

The essential guide to digital marketing

4th Edition



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and the Minds of Quirk

What's inside: We look at the difference between **paid** and **organic** search results and look through the **key terms** and **concepts** that will help you understand this relationship. You also learn how to get the most out of your **search engine marketing** and **pay per click advertising**.

10.1 introduction

Every day, all around the world, millions of people use search engines to find content on the Internet. Search engines are web-based programs which index the web and allow people to find what they are looking for. "Search" or "search marketing" is often used to refer to the industry that has built up around search engines.

Google, Yahoo! and Microsoft's Bing are all well-known search engines. Google is the largest player globally, though dominance varies by region and is under threat from new players to the market. Based on data accessed in July 2011 Google has 85.72% of the search market globally.

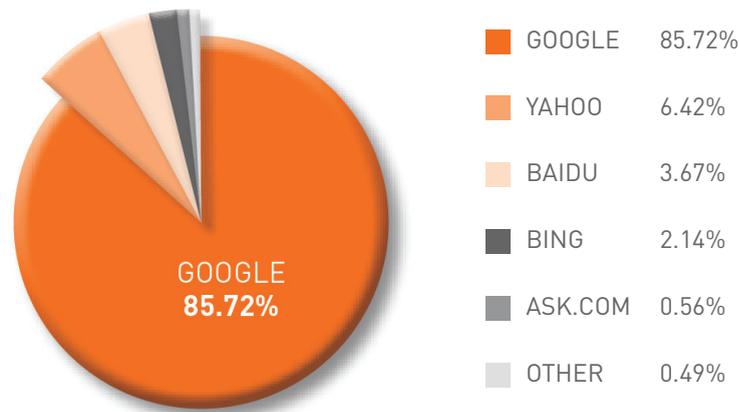


Figure 10.1 Global search market share.
Source: (statistics only - Karma Snack)

When we talk "search", we refer to two different kinds of results:

Organic search results

Organic search results are the primary product of a search engine. These results are the listings generally found on the left hand side on the search engine results pages (SERPs). They are not influenced by financial payment and are therefore also called natural search results. Organic search results need to be consistently reliable to attract (and keep) users. Google's growth and success as a search engine can be directly linked to its superior search algorithm which returns highly relevant organic results.

Paid search results

Paid search, also known as Pay per Click (PPC) advertising, involves the displaying of sponsored results alongside the organic results. Advertisers bid for placement, and pay the search engine when their advert is clicked on.

Paid search results must be distinguished from organic results since paid placement introduces bias. PPC adverts are usually displayed at the top and on the right side of the SERPs. Search engines attract and keep users through organic search, but they make most of their money from paid search.

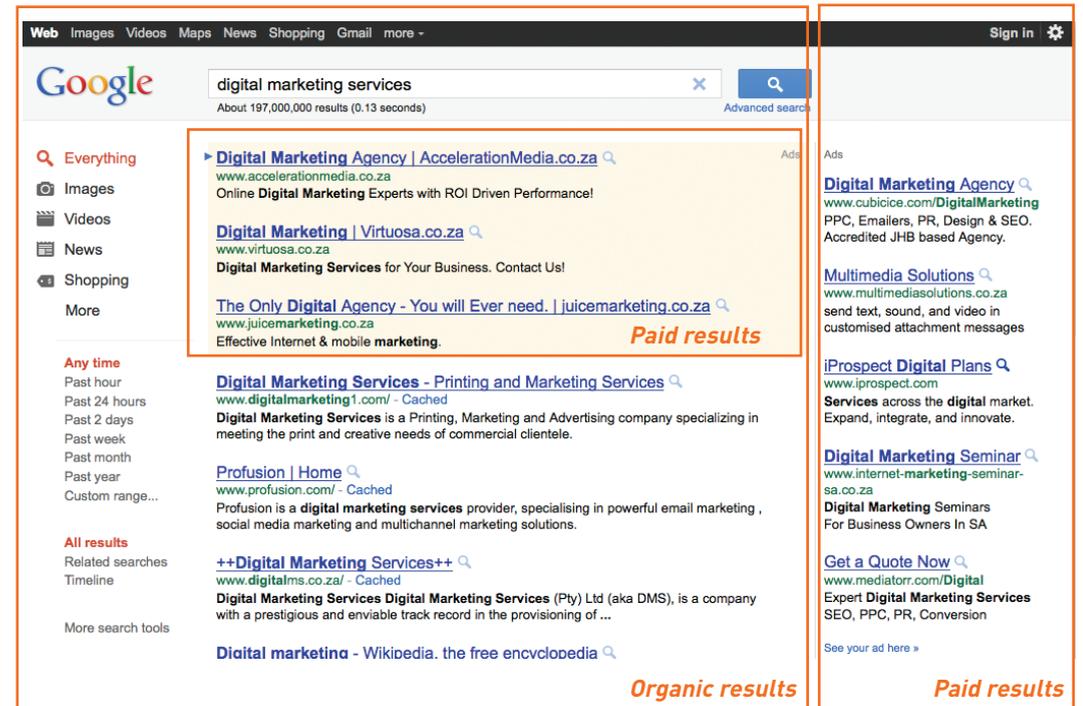


Figure 10.2 An image showing organic and paid search results.

10.2 key terms and concepts

term	definition
Above the fold	The content that can be seen on a screen without having to scroll down.
Algorithm	When it comes to search, a search engine's algorithm is its set of rules for computing ranking.
Browser	An application used to access the Internet. Popular browsers include Mozilla Firefox, Internet Explorer, Google Chrome and Apple Safari.
Index	The databases for keywords created by the search engines.
Keyword	A word or words used by a searcher on a search engine. In SEO, keywords are the words that a website is optimised to rank for, and in PPC, keywords are bid on by advertisers.
Keyword phrase	More than one keyword can be referred to as a keyword phrase.

Organic search results	The listings on a SERP resulting from the search engine's algorithm. These are not paid for.
Paid search results	The listings on a SERP that are paid for.
Pay Per Click (PPC)	Pay per Click is advertising on search engines where the advertiser pays only for each click on their advert.
Ranking	In search, ranking is used to describe the relative position of a web page in the SERPs.
Search engine	A tool for searching the Internet. Users of search engines enter keywords relevant to their search, and the search engine returns results from its databases.
Search Engine Marketing (SEM)	Search Engine Marketing refers to marketing that is related to search.
Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)	Search Engine Optimisation is the practice that aims to improve a website's ranking in the search engines for specific keywords.
Search Engine Results Page (SERP)	The page that shows the results for a search on a search engine.
Spider	An automated program that scans or crawls web pages to gather information for search engines.
Sponsored links	The paid search results on a SERP.
Universal Resource Locator (URL)	The address of a web page on the Internet.

10.3 the importance of search to a marketer

As search engines have become essential to a web user's Internet experience, so search has become essential to a marketer. Search is important for a number of reasons:

1. Search is goal oriented: people use search to find the things they want and need.

The Internet is a highly competitive environment, with literally billions of pages in existence. So how does anyone find the page they're after? Web users find what they need primarily via search. Search drives targeted traffic (and therefore sales) to websites. A web search is a signal of intent from a web user.

2. Search engines are the doorway to the Internet.

According to comScore, 95% of the global Internet population visited a search engine in August 2007.

3. The search industry is BIG.

The daily search volume numbers are in the hundred millions. Research figures indicate that more than 131 billion searches were conducted in December 2009. That's four billion searches per day, 175 million per hour, and 2.9 million per minute (comScore 2010).

4. To be found you must be visible.

If you want your website to generate a significant amount of traffic, it needs to be listed on the major search engines and listed high up enough to be seen. Statistics show that users are not likely to view listings beyond the first 30 results, with the top six (above the fold) listings enjoying the lion's share of clicks (Eyetoools).

5. Top of search equates to top of mind awareness.

Beyond traffic, a high ranking website is valuable for brand perception. Web users often perceive search engine results as an indication of authority. Search visibility promotes brand recognition and research has shown that search engine listings can stimulate brand recall by 220% (Enquiro, 2007).

6. People trust organic search.

Research has shown that over 71% of people have more trust in organic results than paid search results (Prussakov, 2008).

7. Catch potential customers at every phase of the buying cycle.

Most purchases are subject to a buying cycle. At different points in that cycle, prospects are searching with different key phrases. Give them what they want at each phase, and they will keep coming back till they're ready to buy. And they'll be ready to buy more quickly, because information is the best way to shorten the buying cycle.

8. Many people have a search engine as their browser home page.

Often, the home page of a browser is set to a search engine. Many users enter URLs into the search engine instead of the address bar of the browser – meaning that even if they know the URL of a website, they are finding it through search.

10.3.1 A Three Way Relationship: Search Engines, Webmasters and Users

Search engines, Internet users and website owners are involved in a symbiotic three-way relationship. Each party depends on the other two to get what they need.

Users want to find what they are looking for on the Internet.

They use search engines to lead them to websites, and they favour search engines that deliver the most relevant and useful results.

Search engines want to make money from selling advertising.

The more users they have, the more advertising search engines can sell. Therefore, search engines must list their results according to relevance and importance in order to attract and keep users. In turn, search engines favour sites that are relevant and useful to users.

Website owners, webmasters and online marketers want search engines to send traffic to their sites.

Therefore, they need to make sure their sites are relevant and important in both the eyes of the search engines and the users.

Page and Brin sum it up in their pre-Google paper *The Anatomy of a Large-Scale Hypertextual Web Search Engine*:

“The most important measure of a search engine is the quality of its search results.”

10.3.2 What Does a Search Engine Do?

Search engines have four main functions:

- They crawl the web (via spiders).
- They index the web documents and pages they find.
- Search engines process user queries.
- Finally, they return ranked results from the index.

A search engine is made up of a number of parts all working together:

- A **crawling spider**, also known as a web crawler, **robot** or bot, is an automated indexing program. It goes from page to page, following links and indexing or recording what it finds.
- The **index** is what the spider creates. It is a “library” of pages on the Internet and it consists of tens of billions of pages! The search engine creates databases for keywords, so it knows where to go to when a user enters a query.
- The **engine** is the part that does the actual searching. Users input a search query by typing a keyword or phrase into the search bar. The engine then checks its index to find relevant pages and delivers them ordered from most relevant and important to least relevant and unimportant.
- The **SERP** (search engine results page) is the ordered listing of results for the user’s query. A SERP contains a description and link to the result.

10.3.3 Search Engine Marketing

Search engine marketing (SEM) has two arms: search engine optimisation (SEO) and pay per click (PPC) advertising. These correspond to the two types of search results.

$$\text{SEO} + \text{PPC} = \text{SEM}$$

SEM search engine marketing	
SEO search engine optimisation	PPC pay per click
PROS	PROS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - long term ROI - high volume - more exposure, branding and awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - quick low cost setup - highly measurable and trackable - minimal development time required, if at all
CONS	CONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - tough to quantify - lots of ongoing work - results can take a while to be seen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - can be more expensive - CPC is climbing - constant monitoring required

Figure 10.3 The pros and cons of search engine marketing.

SEO aims at improving a website’s ranking in the natural search results. PPC advertising involves bidding for placement in the paid search results section of the SERP.

Both SEO and PPC advertising are based around the same fundamental concept: **keywords**.

10.3.4 Keywords – Making Sense of it All

Keywords, or key phrases, are what a user enters into a search engine query to find websites. Both SEO and PPC advertising involve selecting the keywords relevant to a company’s website and used by potential customers. SEO aims to have a website rank in the natural results for its target keywords. In PPC advertising, the advertiser bids on desired keywords to achieve rankings in the paid results.

The following two chapters deal with the two arms of search engine marketing: *Search Engine Optimisation* and *Pay Per Click Advertising*.

10.4 universal search

In 2007, Google introduced a radical change to its search engine results pages with the concept of universal search. Also referred to as blended search, universal search results include a variety of media and search verticals in the search results pages. For example, a search result for “Sherlock Holmes” includes images and video amongst the text results.



Figure 10.4 A Google search for “Lionel Messi” returns much more than just a website URL.

Other verticals that are included are news, location or local results, real time results, and even now recipes, among others.

The effect of this change in the layout of search engine results pages has been to draw the user further down the page. Instead of the focus being exclusively on the top two or three web results, eye-catching image thumbnails are encouraging a greater distribution down the search page.

Google, Bing and other search engines continue to innovate to ensure that they are returning relevant, useful results to users.

10.5 summary

Search engine marketing is the industry that has built up around search engines. It consists of both paid and organic search.

To use organic search as an effective search marketing tactic, you must incorporate search engine optimisation (SEO) practices, and aim to improve a websites ranking in the natural search results. This will lead to long term ROI, more exposure and brand awareness.

For effective paid search marketing, create pay per click adverts which are quick to set up, highly measurable, trackable and cost effective.

The effectiveness of both arms of search engine marketing, SEO and PPC, is highly dependent on the use of keywords or key phrases.

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