

Search Undervalued, Critical To Brand Campaigns

Contributed by eMarketer
Tuesday, 25 September 2012

Search leads consumers to new branded content

Search helps build strong brands by bettering brand-health metrics. But creating long-term relationships is usually foremost for brands, and, according to eMarketer, in a new report, "Search for Branding: Tools for Better Campaigns," even though a majority of business-to-consumer (B2C) marketers now believe that search affects brand-building, digital executives sometimes still find it tough to prove that search is a critical ingredient in branding.

Search is not just for direct-response marketing anymore, and its use for branding tends to be far more subtle than when used simply to drive a sale.

Search, as eMarketer defines it, includes not just paid ads on search engines but also search engine optimization (SEO) to boost organic rankings; mining data from search ads or SEO to discover more about a brand's customers or prospects; and using general search data "not necessarily from a brand's own efforts" to get a sense of the target audience and the brand's competition.

"When considering whether or not to weave search into a brand's total campaign, there is one simple, inarguable reason why brands should use it," said eMarketer. "Search is where the audience can be found."

AYTM Market Research found that as of June 2012, the vast majority of US internet users used search engines either daily (63.5%) or fairly often (21.0%).

Because consumers use search so regularly, brands really don't have much choice but to connect with consumers there.

Moreover, search results influence consumers' perceptions about a company, according to 81% of the respondents worldwide in a November 2011 study from PR agency Weber Shandwick. "Even the absence of a brand from search results could influence consumers by subliminally implying the brand is not important in the context of whatever the search query involved," said eMarketer.

And to get consumers to see branded content, search is key. Once companies invest in content marketing, nearly 78% of brand and agency marketers used paid search and almost 69% used organic search optimization to increase the target audience's awareness of branded content, according to a January 2012 study from content discovery platform Outbrain.

"Brands need search and not just paid ads and higher organic rankings to help them achieve their overall marketing goals," said eMarketer. "And they need to connect all their search activities to their overall branding campaigns."

The full report, "Search for Branding: Tools for Better Campaigns," also answers these key questions:

- Besides increasing awareness and website traffic, how can search marketing help overall branding efforts?
- When it comes to branding, is paid search more important than search engine optimization?
- What makes search problematic for brand-oriented goals?

6 August 2012