

Search: Bigger isn't always better

The latest research from Nielsen//NetRatings, the Internet research specialist, shows that when it comes to advertising on search engines, companies need to rely on more information than purely the size of a search engine's audience when choosing where to spend their budgets for keyword placements.

Tim Roe, Head of Data Analytics at Nielsen//NetRatings says "Published for the first time today, the research shows that when it comes to placing keywords on search engines, a bigger audience is not always better. Understanding that the smaller search engines can be as successful as some of the larger ones in generating click throughs can help companies to improve their return on investment, and make their promotional spend go further."

Top 20 UK Search Engines, ranked by the number of click throughs per searcher

Brand	Click throughs Per Searcher	Rank by click through	Rank by Number of Unique Searchers
Google Search	17.9	1	1
Yahoo! Search	14.5	2	2
AltaVista Search	13.6	3	15
Tiscali Search	7.8	4	12
My Way Search	6.0	5	6
MSN Search	5.5	7	4
Wanadoo Search	5.5	6	10
Lycos Search	4.8	8	16
Ask Jeeves Search	4.5	9	3
Dogpile.com Search	2.7	10	18
AOL Search	2.3	11	7
Lycos Europe Search	2.0	12	13
YELL.com Search	1.6	13	9
Search the Web! Search	1.5	14	19
DealTime Search	1.2	15	11
Kelkoo Search	1.1	16	5
NexTag Search	1.0	17	8
WebFetch Search	0.5	19	14
Shopping.com Search	0.5	18	20
Info.com Search	0.4	20	17

Source: Nielsen//NetRatings MegaView Search Dec 2004

The MegaView Search report uses click throughs as a measure of success for search engines. When a searcher types a keyword or phrase into a search engine, they are served a number of results linking to other websites. This report measures how many of these search results are actually clicked on. For many search engines, these click throughs are used as the currency to charge for keyword placement, and by websites to measure the success of their keyword advertising.

As the table above shows, in December 2004 Google had the highest number of searchers, and the highest click through rate of any search engine in the UK. However, some other search engines may be ignored by marketers despite their success at generating click throughs. For instance in December, Tiscali, ranked 12th in terms of audience generated 7.8 click throughs, making it the fourth most successful search engine in terms of click throughs. Similarly AltaVista Search was ranked at 15 in terms of audience, but it came third in

terms of number of click throughs per searcher. This information is crucial when assessing how to allocate budgets.

When looking at the type of sites that are most often clicked through to, the research shows that two of the most popular destination categories are entertainment and multi-category commerce.

Destination Category	Unique Searchers (000s)
Search Engines/Portals & Communities	7,113
Entertainment	3,920
Multi-category Commerce	3,719
News & Information	3,121
Telecom/Internet Services	2,558
Travel	2,021
Computers & Consumer Electronics	2,184
Education & Careers	1,547
Family & Lifestyles	1,536
Home & Fashion	1,466
Government & Non-Profit	1,497
Finance/Insurance/Investment	898
Automotive	647
Special Occasions	545

Source: Nielsen//NetRatings MegaView Search Dec 2004

Uniquely, the MegaView Search report highlights how some search engines are more successful at driving click throughs in certain categories, information which is crucial to website owners when choosing where to place their keywords.

Top Ten Search Engines for Multi-Category Commerce

Search Engine	Number of Successful Searches
Google Search	2,117
Kelkoo Search	869
Yahoo! Search	647
NexTag Search	297
MSN Search	293
My Way Search	235
Ask Jeeves Search	209
DealTime Search	181
Wanadoo Search	94
Tiscali Search	53

Source: Nielsen//NetRatings MegaView Search Dec 2004

As Tim Roe comments “There are many factors that influence the success of a search engine. As with other forms of advertising, companies cannot rely solely on the size of the audience to a particular search engine as a guarantee of attracting the right target audience to their website, product or service.

Search marketers need to take a more sophisticated approach to understand how many successful searches a search engine generates and which search engines are most successful in which categories. For the first time, this research from Nielsen//NetRatings allows companies to plan with a more balanced view of search engine performance by click throughs, searchers and successful searches.”

Please source all information to Nielsen//NetRatings.

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About Nielsen//NetRatings

Nielsen//NetRatings is the global standard for Internet audience measurement and analysis, providing companies with valuable insight into their businesses. Nielsen//NetRatings offers the industry's premier source of actionable Internet data and digital media research on Website usage, online advertising, consumer attitudes and competitive analysis. For more information, please visit www.nielsen-netratings.com