How Searchers Work

- Understanding how searchers work is essential to creating compelling content and ads

- We will discuss

    - Visitor behavior

    - The searcher's intent

    - The searcher's click

    - The searcher's follow-through

Visitor Behavior

- Visitors may have different goals than you!

- Understanding "buyer behavior" or "voter behavior" is important, and not a new idea

  – Buyer in early stage -> "primary demand"

    • Wants to know if there is a solution to some problem

  – Later, buyer exhibits "selective demand"

    • Wants a particular brand or product to solve problem

  – How to present candidate to attract most votes?

    • Voter behavior might favor the front-runner or root for the underdog

  – Medical sites need to understand patient behavior

The Searcher's Intent

- What does the searcher really want?

- Andrei Broder (now at Yahoo!) gives three categories of searchers:

  - Navigational searchers
    - Want to find a particular (perhaps known) site
  - Informational searchers
    - Answer questions, learn about a subject
  - Transactional searchers
    - Want to do something

Navigational Searchers

- Want to find a specific web site
    - Might have visited in past
    - Might have been told about it
    - Might just assume it exists (name of company)
    - Don't want deep info – want home page!

- Example navigational queries
    - "internal revenue service"
    - "toys are us"
    - "barnes and noble"
    - "delta"

Navigational Queries Common

- Navigational queries dominate top-n lists

- For MSN Search

  - At least 26 of top 30 queries in 2006 are navigational

  - Representing more than 5% of all queries

- Top 10 queries from Excite 2001 log:

  - **yahoo**
  - las vegas
  - **hotmail**
  - sex
  - **ebay**
  - miami
  - casino
  - maps
  - **hotmail.com**
  - horoscopes

Addressing navigational queries

- Get indexed!

- Ensure good description of home page with your company or product name

- Consider misspellings

- Generally fewer competitors for top rankings

Your company might battle "negative" sites, such as this one that dogs Amway.

Informational Searchers

- Want to find deep information about a subject
    - Believe such information exists
    - Don't know where it is
- No single right answer – may want many pages!
- Often start with simple query and then refine

- Have not chosen product to buy, so they may be influenced by information they find useful

Transactional Searchers

- Already know what they want to do

- Want to find place to perform task

  - Access a database

  - Buy a product

  - Download files

  - Examine train schedule

- Ideally want deep pages, e.g., a product page

  - Often have little content, and don't rank well

- Need to make title and snippet relevant to query

Relevant titles and snippets

- Given a product search:

A query for "canon s60 digital camera" signifies someone ready to buy . . . .

. . . but the top four sponsored links don't contain the model number. The searcher probably clicks #5.

Distinguishing Query Types

- Often difficult to determine navigational vs. informational vs. transactional queries

- Many queries are ambiguous
  - delta
  - cardinals
  - paris hilton
  - jaguar

- Might need to focus on less ambiguous queries to improve conversion rate and reduce CPC costs
  - hilton paris france
  - jaguar cars

Where Searchers Look

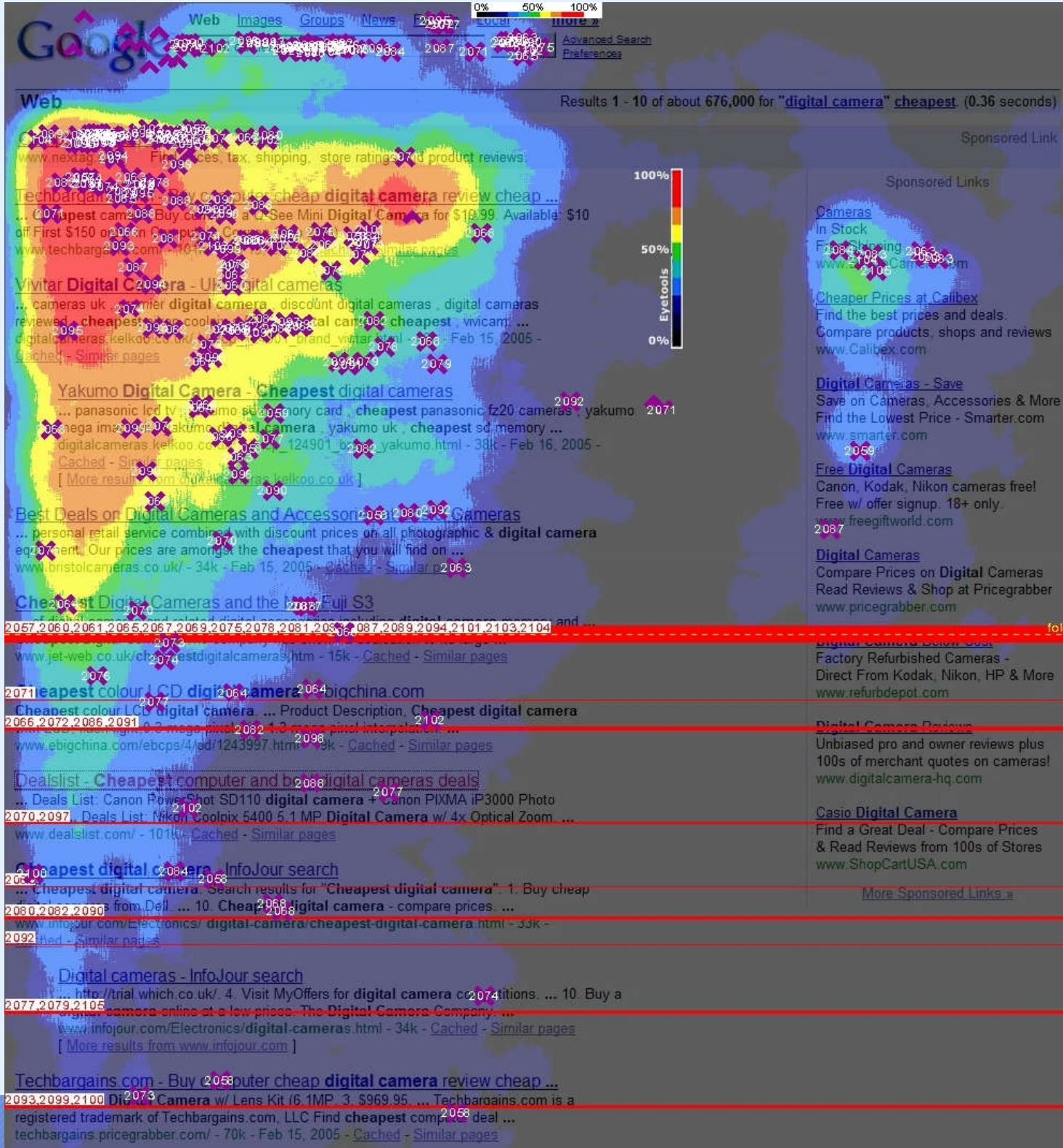- Searchers scan (not read) a search results page

- There are common patterns of how people look at the results

  - Many focus on organic results

  - Most everyone looks at first two or three results

  - For a viewed result:

- How searchers look at results

- Eye-tracking studies have shown exactly where

Eye-tracking

- From Eyetools

- You can do the same kind of test on your web site

Where Searchers Click

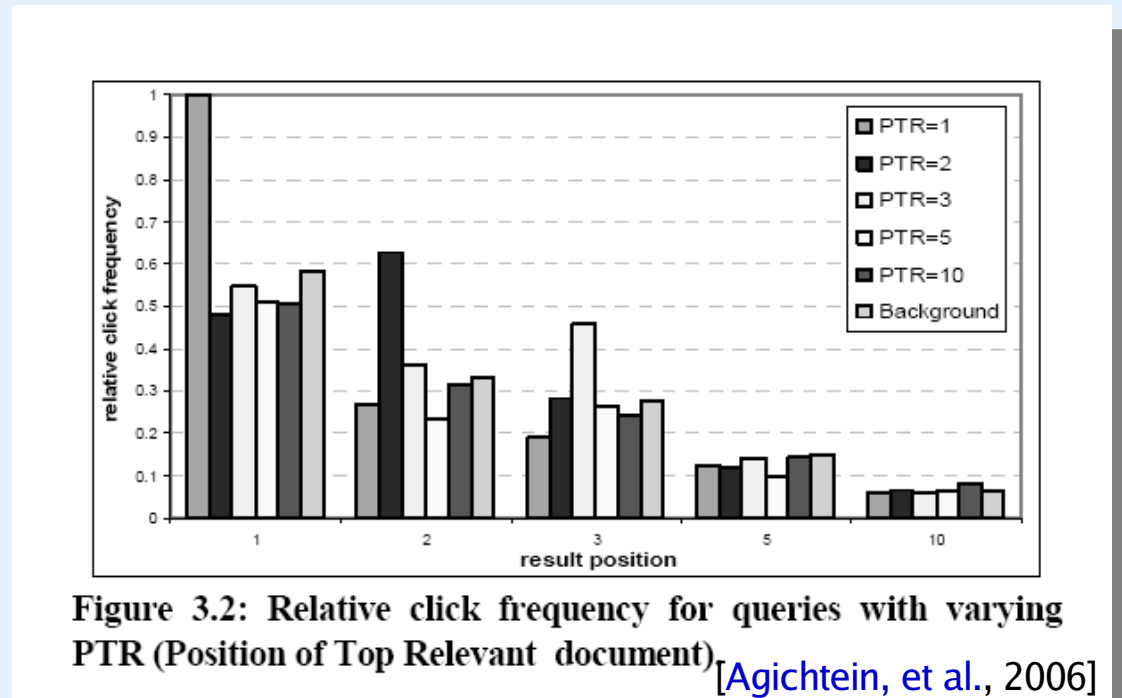- Why do searchers click where they do?
  - Often it is habit!
  - They decide quickly
  - Organic results clicked 60% of the time
- Sometimes searchers don't click on first page at all
  - Most often to revise their query (70%)
  - Sometimes to try a different engine (25%)

Figure 3.2: Relative click frequency for queries with varying PTR (Position of Top Relevant document)

[Agichtein, et al., 2006]

The Searcher's Follow-Through

- Getting searchers to click to your web site is not enough!

    – You want them to read your message, buy your product, etc.

    – Visitors decide within 10 seconds of whether to stay or to leave

- To retain visitors, you need

    – To have the information they were looking for (query terms visible, product pictures, prices, features, etc.)

    – A fast an error-free browsing experience

- Often useful to think about a behavior model

Understanding Visitor Behavior

- Visitor behavior affects search marketing

  – Different kinds of content and targeting is required

- This is a sample web conversion behavior model

  – You want to assist the searcher/buyer in every step

The Web Conversion Cycle

Different Queries, Same Intent

- Searchers can use different types of queries, all with the same end goal

Searcher Type	Search Query	What Searchers Want	Why Pages Rank Highly	Why Searchers Click
Navigational	amazon	Amazon home page	Query words in title and URL	Query words in title and snippet
Informational	low carb diet	Deep information from several sites	Text-rich pages with query words	As above, with trusted sources and brands
Transactional	south beach diet	Buy page from bookseller	Query words in title and text	As above, with a great offer