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
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:
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
## Different Queries, Same Intent

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

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