

THE IMPORTANCE OF PAGE-ONE VISIBILITY

KEYWORD QUERIES AND NATURAL SEARCH TRENDS FOR NON-BRANDED KEYWORDS

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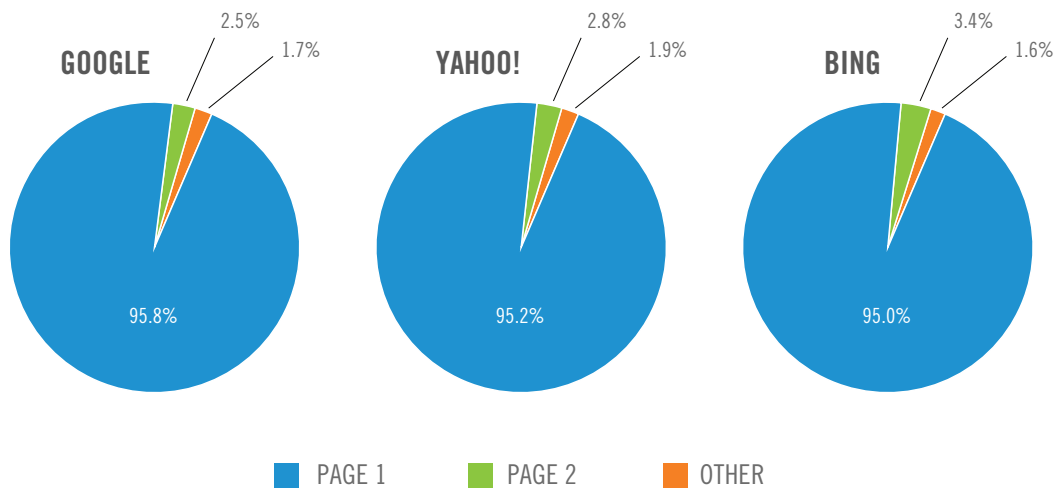
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A brand's position on search engine result pages (SERPs) is critical to driving site traffic. iCrossing analyzed natural search results for non-branded keywords for 10 clients and found that more than 95 percent of all site traffic from search engines comes from page-one results. Our findings also validate the trend towards longer keyword search strings by users and that there are opportunities for marketers to improve their page-one rankings by optimizing for keywords that show up lower in the results. In order to compete for today's sophisticated online consumers, brands must have a deep understanding of how users arrive at their website, and the tools and know-how to optimize their site to stay in front of the consumer at every step of the purchase cycle.

Where does your website rank within the natural search results for critical generic keywords? How much traffic for those terms comes from the **first-page** of the results? How can you identify keyword opportunities to further drive results? How important is the “long tail”? These are just some of the questions we will tackle in this report.

iCrossing analyzed data from 10 clients across several verticals for nearly nine months. We filtered branded terms, leaving primarily non-branded natural search visits (unique). iCrossing’s Natural Search Marketing Platform provided the data, which segments visitor data by engine, by result entry page, and at the keyword level.

VISITS BY SERP ACROSS THE “BIG THREE” ENGINES



According to iCrossing data, roughly 95.3 percent of all non-branded natural search traffic comes from page-one of the [SERPs](#). While visibility on page-two or three may seem “visible” to many, the likelihood that these results will drive traffic to your website is minimal. This percentage is over 5 percent higher than the well-known [AOL data leak](#) that experts analyzed countless times back in 2006. But, it also validates that roughly the same percentage holds true across all of the “big three” (Google, Yahoo! and Bing) engines.

TO PUT THINGS INTO PERSPECTIVE

If you break down the 8.9 million non-branded visitors tracked in this study, you will discover that:

- + More than 8.5 million visitors came from page-one
- + Just over 232,000 visitors came from page-two
- + Just over 180,000 visitors came from page-three+

These percentages are significantly higher than a recent [IAB Europe and InSites Consultancy report](#) which concluded that more than 40 percent of European users give up after checking the first 10 search results, and 70 percent give up after scanning 20 search results.

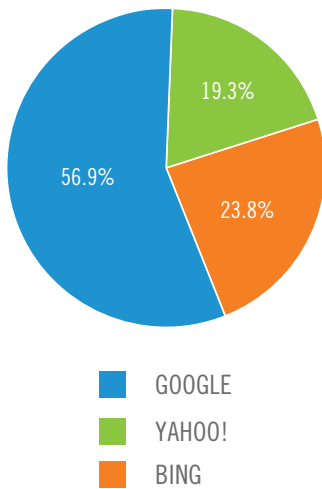
The same report that calculated the percentages above can also be used to help build out your target keyword set. Specifically, you can easily identify “unknown” keywords that are already driving traffic or leads from results beyond page-two of the search results. These are obvious candidates for optimization, as more than 95 percent of all users aren’t going that deep into results. Most analytics applications cannot do this out of the box, but there are [advanced filters](#) that can be created for Google Analytics. If this type of report isn’t available using your current analytics application, you’ll have to gather keywords and then pull position data to identify potential opportunities.

Knowing “where” (meaning what page in the SERPs) your traffic is coming from at the keyword level is critical to any SEO campaign. However, getting caught up purely on position data for a list of keywords cannot be a primary concern, as it will severely limit your keyword set and traffic potential.

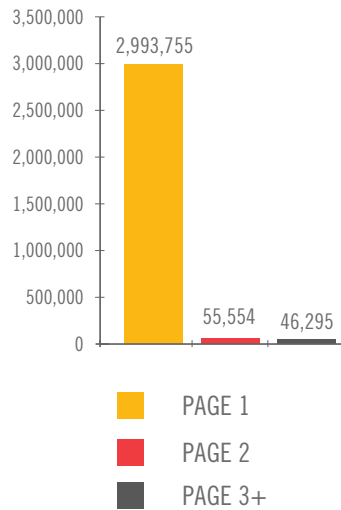
While this report references natural search traffic at the keyword level, this data should also be shared and leveraged from a search media/paid search perspective. There are numerous studies that conclude the synergies between the two disciplines, including [iCrossing’s Search Synergy Report](#), which was released in 2007 and is available on iCrossing’s website.

PAGE REFERRAL TRENDS BY VERTICAL

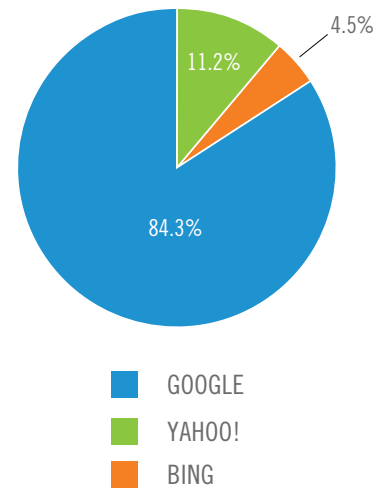
A. SERVICES TRAFFIC SOURCE



B. TRAVEL VERTICAL VISITS BY SERP



C. EDUCATION TRAFFIC SOURCE



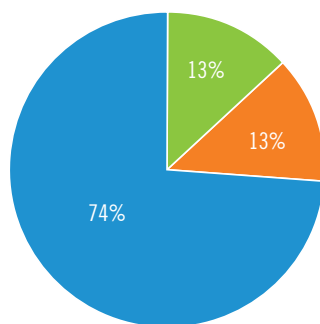
iCrossing noticed some interesting trends when analyzing the same SERP data by client or vertical. While some of these trends were always assumed, this data helps to verify the following:

- A. Of the 10 clients included in this research, two fall under the “Services” vertical (health and insurance), which had the lowest percentage of first-page traffic, coming in at 93 percent. This vertical tends to draw more “information gatherers” since users drill deeper into the results looking for health- or insurance-related information. These same two clients also had a higher percentage of Bing traffic than all others.
- B. Three of the 10 clients were in the “Travel & Hospitality” vertical, which had the highest percentage of first-page traffic, over 97 percent. Their non-branded natural search visitors totaled over 3,095,604, of which 2,993,754 entered from page-one of the search results. These clients rank well for a variety of terms throughout the entire decision-making process. Above-the-fold (normally positions 1-4) rankings for several “head” terms, such as “cruises,” “luxury hotels” and “resorts,” brought in more than 200,000 visitors alone, which certainly helps.
- C. One of iCrossing’s client samples fell under the “Education” umbrella; however they are technically a retailer. In this case, more than 84 percent of all non-branded natural search referrals came from Google. This was not a surprise, but it was a validation that a higher percentage of “20-something” college students favor Google over both Yahoo! and Bing.

To be honest, the findings above didn't surprise those of us at iCrossing. Any savvy search marketer should know where to find their target audience. Typically, you don't hear search engine optimization (SEO) folks talking much about personas, but it's a good idea to get them from your client – as long as they're somewhat fresh and available. Some SEO tactics work better on Google than Bing, and vice-versa. In this day and age you cannot focus on one or the other (especially with the Bing-Yahoo! deal), but it's good to know where to find your potential customers.

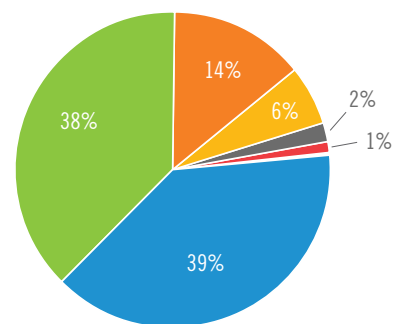
SEARCH ENGINE MARKET SHARE AND KEYWORD QUERIES

A. NON-BRAND MARKET



■ GOOGLE
■ YAHOO!
■ BING

B. WORDS USED IN QUERIES, RETAIL



■ 1 ■ 2 ■ 3 ■ 4 ■ 5 ■ 6

In researching the importance of page-one visibility, iCrossing found some interesting engine and query trends worth noting:

- When looking at the “big three” market share, Google is coming in strong at **74.35 percent** – meaning that of the 8.9 million non-branded natural search visits, 6.7 million came from Google. This percentage is significantly higher than the recently published numbers from [comScore](#), but no segmentation of branded and non-brand data existed in their report.
- The number of words used in non-branded search queries for our clients in the retail vertical seems to be a bit lower than those studied in a recent [Hitwise study](#). However, our data spans multiple months, is primarily non-brand and specific to the retail vertical. iCrossing's findings revealed that of the 3.6 million non-branded natural search visits for the two clients analyzed in this report, 61 percent of the queries included two or more words – and close to **24 percent** of them were three words or more. These two clients are ranking very well for some very competitive one-word queries.

Page-one visibility is obviously critical to success when targeting non-branded keywords through natural search. Potential customers who are beginning their decision-making process trust that search engines will bring forth the best and most relevant results. This makes page-one visibility for very broad, non-branded “head” keywords critical. However, as search engines mature, so do searchers. The increase in the number of words used in a query has been on the rise for several years, and will more than likely continue to grow.

Successful search marketers know the value of “head” terms, but must also be aware of the value that “torso” and “tail” terms bring. Lengthy discussions around latency, first click vs. last click, attribution, etc. need to be brought up early on, otherwise it's very difficult to show the true impact that natural search is having on sales or leads. Regardless, your brand needs to be front-and-center on page-one, at every step of the purchase cycle.